What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain that began spreading from person-to-person in China and has now spread to a number of other countries and into the United States, including Ohio. Health experts are concerned because this new virus has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people — especially people over age 60 or who have weakened immune systems. Travelers to and from certain areas of the world may be at increased risk. **Chinese ancestry—or any other ancestry—does not make a person more vulnerable to this illness.**

How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details. Currently, it is thought to spread through:

- the air by coughing and sneezing
- by close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

How severe is COVID-19?

Experts are still learning about the range of illness from COVID-19. Reported cases have ranged from mild illness (similar to a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires hospitalization. So far, deaths have been reported mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.

What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus:

Fever

Cough

Difficulty breathing

When should I seek medical attention?

If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact your regular doctor first. **Do not go to the emergency room.** Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have difficulty breathing, it doesn't mean you have novel coronavirus, but you should call 911.

If you're over 60 and you have underlying conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease, come up with a plan with your doctor to identify your health risks for coronavirus and how to manage symptoms. Contact your doctor right away if you do have symptoms.

How is COVID-19 treated?

There are no medications specifically approved for coronavirus. Most people with mild coronavirus illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

How can I prevent from getting COVID-19?

If you are planning to travel, please follow the CDC's guidance: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel.

Right now, there are no additional precautions recommended for the general public. There are steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If hand washing facilities are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent COVID-19 infections. Additionally, the CDC, U.S. Surgeon General and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend that face masks are only worn by health workers and those caring for someone in close settings to help prevent the spread of disease to others. Face masks worn by those that are well may cause a false sense of security.

For more information: www.clevelandhealth.org

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