CORONOVIRUS FAQ’s

Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?
A: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Symptoms can include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and pneumonia.

Q: What is UMass Boston doing about 2019-nCoV?
A: University Health Services, our Emergency Response Team and many campus officials are closely monitoring the outbreak of 2019 n-CoV. There are currently no identified cases of infection in Massachusetts or at UMass Boston. We have been in constant communication with the Massachusetts Department of Health as well as the Boston Public Health Commission. They understand all colleges and universities have many international travelers which puts them at a higher theoretical risk, but in fact the risk of contracting the coronavirus in the U.S. is very low. The University has proactively prepared for the possibly of a case of coronavirus on campus. If there is a case on campus, we will be setting up a special helpline to answer questions. Current advice can be obtained on the UHS webpages as well as visiting the CDC 2019-nCoV FAQ page.

Q: What if I recently traveled to Wuhan, China?
A: If you are a UMass student, faculty or staff member and have travelled in or through Wuhan, China, or if you have had direct contact with someone ill with 2019-nCoV in the past 14 days, please call the UHS triage nurse at 617-287-4794 for advice.

If you were in Wuhan or had direct contact with someone ill with 2019-nCoV and feel sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you left Wuhan:

- Call the UHS triage nurse at 617-287-4794
- Stay where you are until one of our nurses calls you back. Do not come to the Health Center, attend class, or visit the dining hall, to limit exposure to others.
- Practice careful and frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others. Use an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- If you live with others, wear a mask if you are coughing, sneezing, and/or or congested with a runny or stuffy nose.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.
• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.

Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from Wuhan, China, please call the UHS triage nurse at 617-287-4794. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area, please call the UHS triage nurse at 617-287-4794. Your healthcare provider will work with the Mass. Department of Public Health, Boston Public Health Commission and the CDC to determine if you need to be tested for 2019-nCoV.

Q: What if I have all the above symptoms but never traveled or was in contact with a case of coronavirus?

A: You probably have the seasonal flu. They symptoms can be exactly the same as the coronavirus. The flu vaccine is not 100% protective, so it is still possible to get the flu even if you had the vaccine.

Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in the United States?

A: The risk from seasonal influenza is much greater and it is still not too late to get your flu shot. The CDC states that the risk of coronavirus to the general American public is low at this time. This is a rapidly evolving situation and the risk may change daily. The latest situation summary updates are available on CDC’s web page 2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China. Some perspective helps: There are 6 cases of coronavirus in the U.S. at this time and no deaths. There are about 25,000,000 cases of the flu this season and well over 15,000 deaths. (CDC) There have only been 200 deaths in China due to the coronavirus.

Q: How can I help protect myself from any respiratory virus?

A: The simple actions below will help to prevent the spread of all respiratory viruses and create a healthier campus community.

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
• Stay home when you are sick.
• Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Getting the flu vaccine: Make an online appointment through your health portal My Health Beacon or call UHS at 617-287-5660.

**Q: Will a mask protect me from respiratory illness?**

**A:** CDC has advised that face masks are NOT recommended or necessary for the general public. The belief that masks are needed at this time has led to a shortage for those who need them, such as health care workers and those who are immunocompromised. Different cultures have different customs with regard to the use of protective masks. Masks are worn for a variety of health reasons and do not necessarily indicate illness. Masks can provide protection by preventing the wearer from touching their mouth and nose, which is a common way viruses and germs enter the body. They may also help trap infected droplets when a contagious person coughs or sneezes. (Source: [NPR](https://www.npr.org)).

**Q: Should I travel to Wuhan, China or other countries where 2019-nCoV cases have occurred for work or pleasure?**

**A:** At this time travel is not advised.

**Q: Is there a vaccine?**

**A:** Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect against 2019-nCoV.

**Q: What are the treatments?**

**A:** There is no specific antiviral medication recommended for 2019-nCoV infection. People infected with 2019-nCoV will receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. Learn about [2019-nCoV Treatment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

**Q: What is a novel coronavirus?**

**A:** A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. Seven different coronaviruses, that scientists know of, can infect people and make them sick. Human coronaviruses commonly cause mild to moderate illness in people worldwide or be more serious such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV, which have been known to frequently cause severe illness.

**Q: Where did this virus come from?**

**A:** Public health officials are working to identify the source of the 2019-nCoV. Coronavirus are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others
that circulate among animals. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan, China reportedly had some link to a large seafood and animal market, suggesting the virus likely emerged from an animal source.

**Q: How does the virus spread?**

**A:** This virus probably emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person-to-person, probably through droplets like other respiratory viruses are spread. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. It’s not clear yet how easily 2019-nCoV spreads from person-to-person.

**Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV from a package or products shipping from China?**

**A:** In general, because of poor survivability of coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of 2019-nCoV associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of 2019-nCoV in the United States associated with imported goods. Information will be provided on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus website as it becomes available.

**Q: Why did the World Health Organization call this a global health emergency?**

**A:** The answer is twofold. Because this is a new virus and it is not known how it is spread or how fast it will spread, they are being cautious. Additionally, there are concerns if it spreads to countries with limited health care resources, which are often already compromised in relation to scarcity of food and water, the impact will be drastic.

**Learn More:**

- [2019-nCoV FAQ](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html) - CDC
- [2019-nCoV Travel Health Notices](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/list-coronavirus.html) - CDC
- [Coronavirus FAQ](https://www.npr.org/specials/coronavirus) - NPR