

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Office of Public Health Bureau of Community Preparedness (OPH BCP) is partnering with Louisiana 211 and the Louisiana Association of United Ways to ensure citizens can access to the most current information available for COVID 19. As members of the Governor's COVID19 Taskforce, LDH, OPH BCP and Louisiana 211 work in coordination with all state efforts for COVID 19.

Louisiana citizens can dial 211, 24/7 to reach a live 211 specialist to discuss available help and information for COVID 19. Citizens can also text the keyword "LACOVID" to 898-211 to have instant access to the most current information available in our state.

COVID-19 FAQs for Louisiana

As of Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 12:46pm

ABOUT COVID-19

Q: What is coronavirus or COVID 19?

Coronavirus or COVID 19 is a contagious virus that makes people sick.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people.

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads.

Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

Respiratory droplets produced when coughing and sneezing

- Close personal contact
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

For confirmed coronavirus infections, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Q: Is COVID-19 fatal?

While people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. and abroad, the majority of people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 do recover.

The virus appears to only be severe if it reaches the lungs and remains untreated. Most otherwise healthy people can recover from COVID-19 at home.

TREATMENT

Q: Is there a vaccine or medicine to treat COVID-19?

No.

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for this infection. People infected with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Feeling sick? TESTING for COVID 19

Q: How do I get tested?

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. Your primary care physician can do testing on you, and order a test from LabCorp. Quest labs will begin offering testing later in the week or early next week.

Q: How do I know to get tested or test family members?

If you are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. Your primary care

physician can do testing on you, and order a test from LabCorp. Quest labs will begin offering testing later in the week or early next week.

Q: What do I do if I don't have an established doctor or can't get an appointment?

If you do not have a doctor or if you do not have insurance, contact your nearest community clinic. This website lists all of these clinics:

www.lpca.net/main/for-patients/find-a-health-center

Q: Should I go to the ER? Or, when should I go to the ER?

You should go to the ER if you are seriously ill (difficulty breathing, confusion, dehydrated). If you are sick with typical cold symptoms, call your primary care doctor.

Q: If I need to get tested for COVID 19, how much will it cost?

The treating physician determines where the test is sent for analysis. And, the State is preparing to test more broadly as the federal government expands its testing guidelines. Testing at the state lab is no-cost, but there are criteria for testing at the state lab.

Today, more testing will be conducted by private labs, and there is a cost. These commercial tests are covered under Medicare, Medicaid, and by most insurance companies as an essential health benefit, and the cost vary depending on your coverage. We are unsure at this point if people without insurance will be charged for a test done by a private lab.

Q: What should I do if I have come in contact with someone who has tested positive?

You should self-isolate and limit your contact with other people. And, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. If you develop a fever and a cough, you should contact your doctor.

Q: What should I do if I am sick?

Call your doctor immediately if the following:

- Think you have been exposed to COVID-19
- Are over the age of 60 with symptoms
- Have an underlying medical condition like heart, lung, or kidney disease
- Develop a fever
- Develop symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing

Q. OPH recommends that you stay home and treat your symptoms as you would with the common cold if the following:

- If you are under 60 and other otherwise healthy
- Have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19
- Have not recently traveled to a country with a high rate of COVID-19

Q. What should I do if I am caring for someone who is sick?

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, are over the age of 60, or have an underlying medical condition like heart, lung, or kidney disease, and develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider immediately.

If you are young, otherwise healthy, and have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or recently traveled to a country with a high rate of COVID-19, stay home and treat your symptoms as you would with a common cold

Q: Does pre-existing respiratory illness qualify you for asymptomatic testing?

No.

Currently, there is no testing for people not experiencing symptoms.

COVID-19 testing is based on recent travel to affected areas with combined respiratory illness symptoms, or exposure to a known case of COVID-19.

Currently, there is no testing for asymptomatic people.

SYMPTOMS

Q What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

For confirmed coronavirus infections, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Q: How does COVID-19 compare to influenza in terms of symptoms, mortality rate, number of cases, etc.?

Based on what is known, COVID 19 is at least as severe, if not more serious than flu.

Much is unknown about COVID-19 about how easily it spreads, who most is at risk, and how serious is it going to be.

From preliminary studies, COVID-19 tends to be more severe in people over age 60, and those that have underlying medical conditions. Those most at risk are those over age 60 who have underlying medical conditions.

PREVENTION

Q. Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

No.

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for this infection. People infected with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Q. How can I help protect myself and/or my family?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Actions to help protect you and your family include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 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.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The best preparation families can do is practice good seasonal flu/cold hygiene: cover

your cough, wash your hands (especially after being in public spaces, shaking hands), stay home if you are sick, and get your flu shot!

Q. Should I keep my children home from school or avoid going to work?

You should follow guidance from your specific school district and employer about closures.

Unless otherwise directed, it is not necessary to keep children home from school or avoid going to work unless told to do so by local officials.

Q. Should I cancel my travel plans?

If you have a trip planned, [check the CDC's site](#) for a risk assessment of your destination.

CDC is not recommending that travelers cancel all plans except to specific locations where the threat of COVID-19 spread is significantly higher.

If you travel, take the same precautions you would while home to avoid getting sick or spreading germs including washing your hands thoroughly and often and avoiding contact with sick people.

Q: Should I or my family wear a protective mask?

It is not recommended that most people wear protective masks. This is because most people fiddle with and touch their masks, limiting any protective benefit. Masks are recommended for healthcare providers.

If someone is sick, a mask will limit the spread of the virus by the sick individual. Therefore, the general public is not recommended to use masks at this point, given they don't work well, and they need to be used by healthcare personnel treating those with COVID-19.

Q: Coronavirus is noted on Lysol bottles. Why is Covid-19 categorized as new if listed on old Lysol bottles? Should the public expect any new commercially available disinfectant products to address Covid-19?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses, and they are not new.

There were six existing strains of coronavirus before 2019, some of which cause the common cold. The latest strain, however, is nCoV-2019 (COVID-19) which originated in 2019.

Lysol bottles are not referencing the latest COVID-19, but instead the coronaviruses that cause the common cold. There is no reason to believe, though, that Lysol is not effective for COVID-19, so please use it!

TRANSMISSION

Q. How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads.

Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

- Respiratory droplets produced when coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

Q: Can pets get COVID 19?

Very little research exists about COVID-19 and pets. However, if you are sick, to be cautious, you should limit your contact with your pet.

Q: Is it safe to receive a package from an area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes.

The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, traveled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

HEALTH EFFECTS / COMPLICATIONS

Q. What are severe complications from this virus?

Severe complications include pneumonia in both lungs.

Q. Who is at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19?

Those who are most at risk are people over age 60 AND who have severe chronic medical conditions such as heart, lung, kidney disease or diabetes.

Other people who are not age 60, but who have these same medical conditions also face a higher risk than the general population.

Q. What about women who are pregnant?

There is not currently information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

Q. What is the risk to children?

Although infections in children have been reported, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19 or at greater risk of a serious illness. More information is being gathered to determine more about this outbreak.

Q. What precautions are nursing homes and assisted living facilities taking?

Nursing homes, assisted living centers and other similar healthcare facilities have the authority to restrict entry to people, including family members and friends of residents, during this health crisis.

People are advised to contact individual facilities for restrictions and recommendations that have been put in place at that location.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Q: What should I do if I have recently traveled?

Anyone who recently traveled to China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, or Japan within the previous 14 days, who experiences fever, cough, or other acute illness should

contact a healthcare provider as soon as possible and mention your recent travel. Please call ahead and inform the health care provider about your travel history.

Q: I am a recent traveler from Italy. Can I request a COVID-19 test from my provider for peace of mind? I am willing to pay any applicable cost.

COVID-19 testing is only currently available to sick people due to a limited number of tests available. You should monitor your health for 14-days following your return from travel. If you do become ill in the 14-days (especially with fever and cough), stay home and call your doctor. Your doctor can assist with the necessary steps to determine if testing would be appropriate for you. At this time, there is no test for well people who just want to know if they have been exposed.

Q: I am a recent traveler from Italy and experiencing flu like symptoms. I reported this to my healthcare provider at a recent visit and no testing was offered. What should I do next?

Healthcare providers work with the Office of Public Health to determine if a patient should be tested for COVID-19. It is possible that a flu test was done (and was positive), which would be responsible for the symptoms (and be the reason for no COVID-19 testing). If you continue to have concerns or if your symptoms worsen, please contact your healthcare provider.

RESOURCES

Q Where can I get the most up-to-date information?

Go to the Department of Health's website: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus

COVID-19 in Louisiana

Q: Are there any confirmed cases in Louisiana?

There are more than a dozen presumptive positive cases in Louisiana.

Q: Will Louisiana Health Department's expand testing?

LDH is preparing to test more broadly as the federal government expands its testing guidelines. The Department is in constant communication with the CDC and will test more patients as needed. In addition, the Department expects more tests to take place as commercial labs receive referrals from health care providers.

Q: What is the current COVID 19 situation in Louisiana?

While the CDC now expects community spread in some parts of the United States, the immediate threat to the U.S. remains low. That said, it is important to be prepared.

The Louisiana Department of Health has been preparing for COVID-19 since the outbreak in mainland China. The Office of Public Health has developed guidance for doctors for testing and treatment of COVID-19, as well as developed guidance for home care of patients with coronavirus. This guidance is given to all health care providers via our Health Alert Network.

Additionally, the Louisiana Office of Public Health has activated its Emergency Operations Center and launched public health measures to respond. This is the same strategy being done at the national level under the guidance of the CDC, and in all other states and the District of Columbia.

Q: What is Louisiana's testing capability?

Louisiana has a testing capability of between 150 and 650 patients.

Currently, these tests are coming to the Office of Public Health from provider referrals, and are being accepted based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Commercial testing is now also available, and any positive private lab tests that come back positive will be verified at the OPH lab in Baton Rouge and confirmed by the CDC lab in Atlanta. Health care providers can call the Office of Public Health Division's Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program (IDEpi) 24-7 hotline with

further questions about testing. (LA 211 does not have this hotline number to distribute.)

Q: What is the number of tests being given by healthcare providers for COVID-19 around the state of Louisiana? What percentage have been positive?

For the most up-to-date information about cases in Louisiana, please go to the COVID-19 website: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus

Q: How does the process for testing in Louisiana for COVID-19 work?

The Office of Public Health operates a laboratory in Baton Rouge that performs many types of tests for infectious diseases, such as for tuberculosis and measles. State lab workers are a team of highly trained professionals who are experienced at testing for many kinds of infectious diseases using a variety of different tests.

Q: Is the Louisiana Department of Health concerned about shipping channels such as the Port of New Orleans being affected by COVID-19?

Department officials met with the Coast Guard to discuss potential issues with the COVID-19 virus once it became clearer that the virus was spreading globally. We don't think there will be potential for spreading the virus through shipping channels.

Q: What are Louisiana Health Department leaders doing to monitor people who may have been exposed?

LDH's first priority was to monitor any travelers who returned to Louisiana from visiting China's areas that had the most community spread. As other countries experienced community spread, Louisiana epidemiologists have been in contact with travelers who returned from traveling abroad to high-exposure countries to ask whether they were experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

LDH workers touch base with those travelers each day and ask about their symptoms during a 14-day period of observation. LDH is also ensuring that travelers know the destinations where non-essential travel should be avoided. The countries under a Level 3 Travel Notice are China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.

Q: Will the State identify COVID-19 patients?

No.

Because of patient privacy laws, the Louisiana Department of Health cannot provide any information that might identify patients. This includes name, residence of patient, place of treatment or any other potentially identifying patient information.

Q: What precautions is the State taking to protect our students and school system staff and parent volunteers from possible exposure to the COVID-19?

The Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) has been in contact with the Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) in regard to disease control and prevention of COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date information, people should contact the Department of Education at this email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.

OPH has provided guidance from the CDC on infection control best practices such as handwashing, covering of coughs, disinfection of environmental surfaces, and encouraging students and staff to stay home when they are ill.

Further guidance has been shared on social distancing, cancellation of classes and school events, as well as discouraging social gatherings among students in the event that there is community (person-to-person) transmission of the disease.

Q: Are hospitals prepared?

LDH has been working with the Louisiana Hospital Association (LHA) and the ESF8 Network to prepare hospitals for an outbreak and ensure they have the proper supplies needed as well as protocols in place for anyone treated who tests positive. There is no indication that hospitals don't have what they need on the supply side.

Q: What's the next major step in the Department's plan for responding to an outbreak?

Mirroring the federal government's response, LDH is moving from a 'containment' approach focusing on travelers to a 'mitigation' approach anticipating and plan for person-to-person transmission in the community somewhere in the United States.

We are focused on state and local government preparedness and are providing support to health care providers, schools, businesses and community members to ensure they are adequately prepared to take action to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We don't want people to be alarmed, but we do want them to be prepared. We also want businesses and health care facilities to be prepared to make sure people are safe and protected so we can avoid an unnecessary spread.

Q: Are quarantines being planned?

LDH does not expect to quarantine for this particular infection. LDH has extensive quarantine plans stemming from prior health events such as H1N1 and Ebola.

Q: Is LDH in regular contact with the federal government?

Yes. LDH are in constant contact with the US Center for Disease Control and HHS

In addition, LDH standing calls across state health departments and a standing call internally in Louisiana.

GOVERNMENT PREPAREDNESS

Q: What is the protocol in place for responding to a pandemic like Coronavirus/COVID-19?

COVID-19 behaves in many ways similar to influenza. Because of this, the CDC recommends using the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness plan as our model for the response.

The Louisiana Department of Health has been working on our Pandemic Preparedness Plan for the last 15 years, and we have been preparing for COVID-19 starting in early January 2020.

In early March, the Governor directed the formation of a COVID-19 Task Force with representation from state agencies and federal partners key to preparing for a COVID-19 outbreak. This task force guides updating Louisiana's pandemic flu/COVID-19 response and ensures a continuity of operations and advises the Unified Command Group.

Q: What factors would trigger a government-mandated closure of schools or businesses, etc.?

Where there has been a student in a school with COVID-19, the Office of Public Health would consider steps to close and clean that school. However, this would be triggered first by action from the school.

Specifically, the circumstance(s) that would prompt the Office of Public Health to suggest school closures would be first, when it has been confirmed that children within the school are actively transmitting an infection at the school, causing an outbreak and significant disruption. Secondly, LDH might consider the suggestion if a significant number of students or faculty were out, and normal school activities simply could not continue. In any of these circumstances, LDH would suggest a thorough school cleaning.