

2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

An outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause was identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in mid-December. It was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. The cause was determined to be a novel (new) form of betacoronavirus and was given the name **COVID-19**. Initially it was believed that the source was a seafood and animal market located in Wuhan that may have been illegally selling wild animals. This has not been confirmed. The virus appears to have quickly mutated from animal-to-human transmission to human-to-human transmission. The incubation period for this virus is believed to be between 2-14 days, and an infected person may be contagious during this incubation period before experiencing symptoms. The WHO has issued a COVID-19 epidemic global risk assessment level of “high” and has declared a global health emergency.

The COVID-19 mortality rate appears to be standing steady at 2%. Of those who have died, 80% were over the age of 60, 75% had underlying health conditions, and two-thirds were men. Although children have been infected with COVID-19, most do not experience severe symptoms. There has been limited evidence of possible maternal-fetal transmission. Therefore, nurses who work on a unit where a PUI or confirmed case of COVID-19 is being treated may want to consider requesting a temporary transfer to another unit. Please contact your NYSNA representative if you have concerns about this matter.

United States

To date there have been 13 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. None of these are in New York State or New Jersey.* Specimens from PUIs are now able to be tested at local and state qualified labs, speeding up the amount of time it takes to determine if a patient has COVID-19.

New York State and New Jersey

In NYS and NJ there have been several cases that were tested for possible COVID-19. All PUI cases in NYS and NJ whose tests have been completed have tested negative. Several others are pending test results. This data is expected to change on a daily or weekly basis. **At this time there are no confirmed**

Patients Under Investigation

The CDC recommends that patients in the United States who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a COVID-19 PUI:

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| Fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) | AND | In the last 14 days before symptom onset, a history of travel from China. Or In the last 14 days before symptom onset, close contact with a person who is under investigation for COVID-19 while that person was ill. |
| Fever or symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) | AND | In the last 14 days, close contact with an ill, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient |

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Healthcare Facility Preparedness

The **CDC recommends** that healthcare facilities take the following steps in order to be prepared for suspected COVID-19 patients:

- Stay up to date on the latest information about signs and symptoms, diagnostic testing and case definitions for COVID-19
- Review infection prevention and control policies and CDC infection control recommendations for COVID-19 for:
 - Assessment and triage of patients with acute respiratory symptoms
 - Patient placement (e.g., isolation rooms)
 - Implementation of standard, contact and airborne precautions (including gowns, gloves, face shield or goggles and N95 respirators for healthcare worker protection)
 - Visitor management and exclusion
 - Source control measures for patients (e.g., put facemask on suspect patients and isolated them)
 - Requirements for performing aerosol-generating procedures
- Be alert for patients who meet the persons under investigation (PUI) definition (see table on reverse side)
- Know how to report a potential COVID-19 case or exposure to facility infection control leaders and public health officials
- Make sure staff know whom to see for an occupational health evaluation following an unprotected exposure, when to seek that evaluation and how to do so

Healthcare Worker Safety

Healthcare workers who may come within 6 ft. of a PUI should take the following measures to protect themselves from exposure:

- Immediately place a surgical or procedure mask on the patient
- Don PPE including gloves, gown, face shield or goggles, N95 respirator or PAPR
- Wash hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds, with warm water and soap
- Do not touch mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands

NYSNA strongly recommends that healthcare facilities also take the following critical steps to ensure a safe work environment and adequate patient care:

- Adequate staffing levels to triage, assess and treat patients who have been diagnosed with, or need assessment for, possible COVID-19 infection
- Adequate space to isolate PUIs and/or confirmed cases of COVID-19
- Adequate supply of the recommended PPE to ensure the safety of hospital staff
- Immediately train all healthcare staff on COVID-19 including current rates of infection, modes of transmission, patient triage, isolation and treatment protocols, and infection control measures (including PPE and engineering controls) to protect healthcare staff

NYSNA is working to make sure your employers are taking the steps necessary to ensure the safety of both patients and employees. Please check the NYSNA website at bit.ly/nysnancov for updates.

Contact the NYSNA Health & Safety Representatives at healthandsafety@nysna.org or your facility's NYSNA representatives if you have questions or concerns regarding COVID-19.

**All information in this practice alert is accurate as of the date of its writing. However, as this is a rapidly changing situation, this alert will be updated as new information becomes available.*

Sources: U.S. Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, OSHA, NYS and NJ Departments of Health