

## Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

### What is the current situation?

- There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Grays Harbor County.
- There is more to learn about the novel coronavirus. Since it is a new virus, no one has immunity to it. This means it could spread to a lot of people in a short amount of time.
- Statewide case counts are changing rapidly. The most recent official counts are available on the Washington State Department of Health website at [doh.wa.gov/coronavirus](http://doh.wa.gov/coronavirus).
- There is evidence that the virus is spreading in some communities in Washington.
  - Other viruses that can cause respiratory illness are also spreading, including influenza.
  - We should expect more cases of COVID-19 in the weeks to come.
- The number of confirmed cases of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community provides health experts with information they will need to understand more about this new virus, such as how fast the virus travels from person to person and who is most at risk for complications. It does not inform an individual's medical treatment or recommendations for their care. An individual's treatment and recommendations will be focused on managing their respiratory illness symptoms, regardless of what virus causes the symptoms. The methods used to effectively prevent or reduce the spread of respiratory illness, such as washing your hands often and thoroughly, remain the same. Regardless of the number of identified COVID-19 cases in Grays Harbor, we encourage people to follow the recommendations below (What Can I do to Stay Healthy) to reduce the spread of all respiratory viruses.
- Given the evidence of sustained community transmission in the State of Washington, Public Health will no longer be reporting numbers on "persons under investigation." In the future, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases among Grays Harbor County residents will be posted each day on the Washington State Department of Health website ([doh.wa.gov/coronavirus](http://doh.wa.gov/coronavirus)).

### What do we know now about COVID-19?

- Most cases of COVID-19 are mild.
  - Among people known to have the virus, around 80% aren't sick enough to need hospital care.
  - A small percentage of infected people have developed pneumonia. So far, deaths have been reported mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.
  - Some people are at higher risk of experiencing severe illness:
    - Adults age 60 and older.
    - Individuals who are pregnant.
    - People who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung, or kidney disease.
  - If many people get sick all at once, it can overwhelm our healthcare systems.
- Like other coronaviruses, the novel coronavirus spreads from an infected person to others through:
  - The air by coughing and sneezing.
  - Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
  - Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.
  - In rare cases, contact with feces.

### **What are the symptoms?**

- Symptoms are fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.
- The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of the flu.

### **What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?**

- If you have a fever, cough, or shortness of breath, you should stay home and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
  - Throw used tissues in the trash and wash your hands.
- The care for COVID-19 is the same as for other respiratory illnesses:
  - Drink plenty of fluids
  - Rest
  - Take pain and fever medications as needed
- There are no medications specifically approved for treating COVID-19.
- If you need medical support, contact your regular doctor.
  - Before you go to your doctor's office, call ahead and let your doctor know that you have symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19 and influenza.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you need immediate medical intervention.
  - Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- If you have a medical emergency, call 911.

### **What can I do to stay healthy, and help my community stay healthy?**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
  - If handwashing is not available, use hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (like doorknobs and light switches).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- If you're pregnant, or over 60, or have chronic health problems like heart, lung, or kidney disease, or a weakened immune system, avoid being around sick people and, and if possible, being in large gatherings.
  - Talk with your health care provider to identify your risks for coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to manage symptoms if you become ill. Contact your provider right away if you do have symptoms.
- Currently, there is no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19.
- If you are traveling overseas, follow the CDC's guidance: [www.cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel)
- Plan now so that you can be ready in case many people are sick and can't go to work or school.
- Talk at work about how your workplace can still operate if many workers are out sick or if they need to stay home to care of their family members.
- Supporting others in our community will help us be resilient if COVID-19 becomes more widespread.
  - Talk to your friends and neighbors about how you can help each other if people in your households get sick or if your children aren't able to go to school or childcare.

- Examples include, setting up a phone tree so you can call one-another to see how people are doing and to connect; make a plan to drop off groceries or take-out on someone's doorstep if they feel ill.
- Even if most cases are relatively mild, there are impacts when large numbers of people are sick and absent from work and school all at the same time. We can all keep the community healthy and strong by following health officials' recommendations.
- You may hear health officials recommend "social distancing," or finding ways to put distance between yourself and others so that you don't get sneezed or coughed on.
  - If coronavirus (COVID-19) becomes widespread, health officials will recommend actions that reduce the numbers of people coming into face-to-face contact to limit exposure and illness.
  - This could include dismissing schools or childcare, postponing or cancelling large gatherings and public events.
- People in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities are often at higher risk for respiratory illness because they may have other underlying health conditions. Organizations may take extra caution when respiratory illness are circulating (ie. during flu (influenza) seasons, and now due to coronavirus COVID-19). Make a plan with your loved ones, and/or their care providers, to identify ways you can stay informed and connected.

#### **Should I wear a mask?**

- Wearing a mask does not protect healthy people against COVID-19 infection.
  - Let's preserve available masks for use by people providing health care to vulnerable people.
- Keep in mind that people wear masks for a variety of reasons, including to avoid pollen and air pollution, as a courtesy to others when they have the common cold, and for other cultural and even social reasons.
- Because mask use is customary in some cultures, it's not appropriate to make assumptions about why someone is wearing a mask or to stigmatize or discriminate against people who choose to wear masks.

#### **Specific information for employers**

- Consider job duties, essential personnel, and back-up strategies to put in place if employees are out sick.
- Consider and plan for telework options (or conducting business meetings with phone or web-based solutions), if possible.
- Consider use of sick leave policies.
- Instruct persons with a fever and cough to stay at home for 7 days or until their symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (like doorknobs and light switches). Standard business cleaning products are effective. A fresh solution of 10% bleach/water (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) will kill respiratory viruses.

#### **More information**

- Grays Harbor Public Health: [www.healthygh.org/covid19](http://www.healthygh.org/covid19)
- Washington State Department of Health: [doh.wa.gov/coronavirus](http://doh.wa.gov/coronavirus) (current updates)
- CDC: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus) (includes guidance for businesses, schools, individuals and families)

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- Specific information for employers: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/Workplace>
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html> (posters for hand washing and health promotion)
- Washington State Department of Health call center for general coronavirus questions: 1-800-525-0127, press #