

## Health Alert

### Updated Interim Guidance for Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) February 28, 2020

#### SUMMARY POINTS

- The outbreak of novel coronavirus is rapidly expanding worldwide and guidance for evaluating potential cases has been revised accordingly.
- Take a detailed travel history for patients with acute respiratory illness.
- Consider COVID-19 for patients with severe lower respiratory illness without an apparent cause and no exposure history.
- Report any suspected cases to PDPH immediately.

In response to the recent rapid increase in the number of countries reporting widespread community transmission of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has revised criteria for guiding which patients should be evaluated for COVID-19. Of note, epidemiologic risk criteria have been expanded to include travel to affected areas with level 2 or higher travel notices. Currently, China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea are considered affected areas although the areas included are subject to change as the outbreak evolves. Criteria that allows testing of patients with severe lower respiratory illness without an apparent cause and no known exposures has also been added and will aid the identification of locally-acquired infections.

#### Patient Assessment and Management:

Providers should maintain vigilance and obtain thorough travel histories when evaluating patients with acute respiratory illness, particularly those with severe lower respiratory disease without an apparent cause. Providers should consider COVID-19 infection in any patient meeting the revised criteria:

**Table. COVID-19 Clinical and Epidemiologic Risk Criteria Guide<sup>a</sup>**

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including healthcare workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset. For healthcare workers, testing may be considered for exposure to patients with suspected COVID-19.
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset. Affected areas have a Level 2 or higher travel notice and currently include: China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea <sup>b</sup> .
Fever with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza) <sup>c</sup>	AND	No source of exposure has been identified

<sup>a</sup>For additional details, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>.

<sup>b</sup>The current COVID-19 affected area list is subject to change. For updates on areas with Level 2 or higher travel notices, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>.

<sup>c</sup>Negative influenza and respiratory virus panel testing along with negative bacterial and fungal culture results are needed to rule out other infectious etiologies.

For persons who fulfill any of the above criteria, please take the following actions:

- Place surgical mask on patient and move patient to a private room as soon as possible. Use an airborne infection isolation room if available.
- Promptly notify infection prevention personnel at your facility and report the suspected case to PDPH (business hours: (215) 685-6742, after hours: (215) 686-4514). PDPH and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH), in consultation with clinicians, will determine whether a patient is a Person Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 and will need testing.
- All staff working with the patient should use standard, contact and airborne precautions (N95 mask) with eye protection. Additional details are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html>.
- SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19) testing will be performed for patients approved as a COVID-19 PUI. Initially, collect the following upper respiratory and lower respiratory specimens for testing:
  - Both nasopharyngeal (NP) and oropharyngeal (OP) swabs placed in viral transport media
  - For those with productive coughs, collect sputum. Sputum induction is not indicated. For patients on mechanical ventilation, collect a tracheal aspirate specimen for testing.
  - Collect an additional NP swab or aspirate for influenza and respiratory virus testing, since these viruses are currently circulating in the community-these are more likely to be a cause of acute respiratory illness even among returning travelers.
- PDPH and PADOH will assist sites with submission of specimens and supporting documentation for SARS-CoV-2 testing. Specimens will need to be refrigerated and transported on ice packs. For further details, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>.

If symptoms develop in a traveler returning from an affected area, the patient should be advised to seek care with advance notification to the healthcare facility and take routine steps to limit the transmission of respiratory viruses (i.e., staying home from work and school, hand washing, good respiratory etiquette). **Please consult PDPH on a case-by-case basis for any patients with an equivocal clinical presentation or travel history not quite meeting the above criteria for evaluation (for example, travelers returning from an affected area with mild symptoms.)**

**Additional Resources:**

- CDC: 2019 Novel Coronavirus Information for Healthcare Professionals: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>
- PDPH: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://hip.phila.gov/EmergentHealthTopics/2019-nCoV>
- PDPH COVID-19 Symposium: See the attached flyer

JOIN DISEASE CONTROL EXPERTS FROM THE  
PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH (PDPH)

# **NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) GLOBAL OUTBREAK: RALLYING THE PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY TO STOP TRANSMISSION AND PROTECT THE PUBLIC**

MARCH 11, 2020 | 9:00AM - 11:00AM  
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL  
237 S. BROAD STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107

## **AGENDA**

- **OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 CHARACTERISTICS, TRANSMISSION AND VACCINE DEVELOPMENT**
- **CURRENT GLOBAL EPIDEMIOLOGY AND LOCAL RESPONSE STRATEGIES**
- **PREPARING FOR THE WORST: SEVERE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD TRANSMISSION**
- **PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS**
- **PANEL Q&A**

**AUDIENCE: HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY, EMERGENCY RESPONDERS,  
ACADEMIC PUBLIC HEALTH COLLEAGUES**



Department of  
**Public Health**  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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