San Francisco Department of Public Health
Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

Top 10 Community Q & A about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)
Updated as of February 25, 2020

On February 25, 2020, Mayor London N. Breed made an emergency declaration to strengthen the city's preparedness for the potential arrival of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) to the community.

The declaration of a local emergency is a legal document that will mobilize city resources, streamline staffing, coordinate agencies across the city, allow for future reimbursement by the state and federal governments and raise awareness throughout San Francisco about how everyone can prepare in the event that COVID-19 appears in our community.

The City and County of San Francisco, led by the Health Department (DPH), is working on preventing the virus, containing its spread, and reducing harm in the community. We are focused on the most vulnerable groups, including children, people living in congregate settings and the elderly.

We understand there are many concerns and recognize the uncertainty of the situation. After speaking with members and leaders in the community, we would like to address the top frequently asked questions and help clarify any confusion there may be.

Stay up to date on this rapidly evolving situation by visiting www.sfdph.org or www.sf72.org and the CDC's website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov. DPH has more information on its infectious disease site: https://www.sfcdcp.org/infectious-diseases-a-to-z/coronavirus-2019-novel-coronavirus/.

Q: Why did San Francisco make an emergency declaration in response to COVID-19?

This action was based on the evolution of the disease globally and is prudent and proactive to ensure that San Francisco is as prepared as possible. This declaration gives us more tools to be even more prepared. Although there are still zero confirmed cases in San Francisco residents, the global picture is changing rapidly, and we need to step-up preparedness. Given the high volume of international travel to San Francisco, it is likely we will see cases eventually. We see the virus spreading in new parts of the world every day, and we are taking the necessary steps to protect San Franciscans from harm.

Q: Do I need to cancel or avoid attending social gatherings or going to restaurants?

At this time, there are no recommendations to cancel social gatherings or avoid restaurants. However, if you are sick, you should stay home and not attend.

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Q: Who are most at risk for COVID-19?

Although Bay Area residents currently remain at low risk, the global picture is changing rapidly, and we need to step-up preparedness. Given the high volume of international travel from SF, there is a growing likelihood that we will see cases eventually. If and when this occurs, the Health Department will make an announcement, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH).A person's risk for this virus depends on travel history and contacts, not on race, ethnicity or culture. Older persons and those with serious underlying medical conditions are most likely to become very ill if infected.

Q: If I'm recommended for home self-quarantine because I was in mainland China within the past 14 days, what should I do?

- Stay home
- Do not go out in public
- Do not go to work
- Do not go to school
- Do not use public transportation (bus, train, Muni, BART, taxi, ferry, Uber or Lyft)
- Do not go to public gatherings
- Monitor your health
    - Take your temperature with a thermometer 2 times a day
    - Look out for symptoms such as cough, fever and shortness of breath

Q: If I develop fever or other symptoms during my home self-quarantine, what should I do?

- Call your doctor and tell them that you were in China within the last 14 days and have developed cough, fever or respiratory symptoms, and call public health for advice.
- Do not have close contact with others.

Q: Can a person leave their home during their self-quarantine period?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises individuals who recently returned from traveling to China and who have no symptoms of illness to stay home from work or school, avoid large crowds and limit their social interactions for 14 days. It is much better if you can stay home most of the time, but if you must go out please try to stay at least six feet away from other people.

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Q: How is the virus spread?

- Much like influenza, it can transmit from person-to-person through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and this is most likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). It can also likely be spread by touching a contaminated surface and then touching our eyes, nose or mouth.
  However, this is a new virus and there are still a lot of unknowns.

Q: Do I have COVID-19 if I have all the symptoms?

- Not necessarily. The symptoms of COVID-19 can resemble other illnesses such as flu. If you are showing signs of fever, coughing or shortness of breath, call healthcare provider and provide them with your travel history.
- A person's risk for this virus depends on travel history and contacts, not on race, ethnicity or culture.

Q: Will masks protect me from COVID-19?

- Good handwashing techniques are the most effective way to prevent yourself from getting sick. This means washing your hands often with soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds.
- If you have a fever or cough, a face mask is recommended to prevent spread of germs to others around you.
- If you do not have symptoms but choose to wear a face mask, it is important to understand that face masks are NOT a substitute for handwashing which is the priority.

Q: How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

- The best way for all San Franciscans to reduce their risk of getting sick – with seasonal colds or flu – will still apply to prevent COVID-19 if it begins to circulate in the community:
  - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - Cover your cough or sneeze
  - Stay home if you are sick
  - Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19
  - If you have recently returned from a country with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials
- You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:
  - Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family
  - Make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick
  - Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure
  - Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself