FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

February 5, 2020

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing respiratory illness in people and others circulating among animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people. Previous coronavirus outbreaks have included severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes the risk to the American public of becoming infected with this novel coronavirus is low.

How do I prevent the spread of viruses, including coronavirus?

- Wash hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if water is not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.

Should I wear a mask?

You should wear a mask if you have a respiratory issue (such as a cough or difficulty breathing) and are in public, especially in a clinic or hospital. Some people may choose to wear a mask in public as their personal preference even if they are not sick.

You do not need to wear a mask if you are not sick.

How should I clean and disinfect communal spaces?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door knobs, tables, keyboards light switches). Use a disinfectant registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or a 10% bleach/water solution to clean surfaces.
How does the UW clean and disinfect?

The University's custodial cleaning program uses an [EPA-registered disinfectant](https://www.epa.gov) to clean touchpoints, public and common area restrooms and kitchens daily. Students living in on-campus housing are expected to clean the private bathrooms in their residences and are provided cleaning [instructions](https://www.ehs.washington.edu).

What do I do if I feel sick?

If you recently returned from Wuhan or another outbreak-affected region AND are experiencing fever and respiratory symptoms (such as coughing or difficulty breathing), [call your health-care provider or nurse advice line. Do not show up at a clinic or urgent care without calling first](https://www.ehs.washington.edu). Your provider will need to take special measures to protect other people in the clinic.

- Students on the UW's Seattle campus may contact [Hall Health Center](https://www.ehs.washington.edu).
- Students at UW Bothell should contact their usual health care provider or a [UW Medicine facility](https://www.ehs.washington.edu).
- Students at UW Tacoma should contact their usual health care provider or [Franciscan Prompt Care at St. Joseph](https://www.ehs.washington.edu).
- Faculty, staff and visiting scholars should contact their primary care provider or a [UW Medicine facility](https://www.ehs.washington.edu).

[Monitor your symptoms closely](https://www.ehs.washington.edu). Remember that the likelihood is low that you have coronavirus. Take your temperature if you believe you have a fever.

[Stay home from school and work](https://www.ehs.washington.edu) until at least 24 hours after your fever ends. If you must go out of the house or be around others, wear a mask and avoid close contact. Be especially careful around infants and small children as well as people who have compromised immune systems and/or are over the age of 65.

[Take care of yourself](https://www.ehs.washington.edu). Rest as much as possible. Drink lots of fluids.

I am a student; should I stay home from class?

If you have respiratory symptoms (such as coughing or difficulty breathing):

- Contact your healthcare provider.
- Stay home until you are no longer contagious.
- Talk with your professors about making up coursework.

Will the UW cancel classes?

There are no plans to cancel classes due to the low risk to the UW community.
I’m hosting an event on campus. Should I cancel it?

Campus events should proceed as normal; there are no restrictions on events at this time. According to public health officials, the risk of coronavirus to the UW community is low. There is no need to take additional precautions beyond those you would normally take to avoid the spread of colds and viruses during flu season.

Can I travel to China?

Effective February 4, 2020, the University has restricted all official travel to China by students, faculty and staff. These restrictions are in effect until further notice. For details on these new restrictions, please visit http://bit.ly/UW-China-Travel. Members of the UW community who are currently in China should check with the UW Global Travel Security team by sending an email to travelemergency@uw.edu. In case of emergency or crisis, travelers can call the 24/7 emergency line at 206.632.0153.

What should a person do who is traveling to the U.S. from China?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending that all travelers from China (including students, staff and faculty) arriving in the U.S. AFTER February 2, 2020 at 2pm stay at home away from others and monitor their health for 14 days.

There is no recommendation for asymptomatic persons arriving from China before February 2 to restrict their activities. All travelers from China arriving BEFORE February 2, 2020 at 2pm can continue to attend school and should take the following steps:

- Watch for any changes in your health for 14 days after leaving China.
- If you get a fever or develop a cough or difficulty breathing during this 14-day period, avoid contact with others. Call your doctor or healthcare provider to tell them about your symptoms and your recent travel.

I feel anxious about coronavirus. What can I do?

We understand that some community members are concerned. Remember that according to our state and local health departments, the risk to the UW community is low. If you would like to talk with someone, support is available to students through campus mental health services:

- Bothell students: Counseling Center
- Seattle students: Let’s Talk, the Counseling Center and Hall Health Mental Health
- Tacoma students: Counseling & Psychological Services
You can prevent the spread of colds and other viral ailments by doing the following:

- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and immediately dispose of the tissue.
- Wash your hands often and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.

**Can you tell us more about the students who are being screened for coronavirus?**

For privacy reasons, the UW is not able to release information about students who are being monitored or tested for novel coronavirus, including their location. At this time, Public Health — Seattle & King County is in contact with the affected students and is closely monitoring the situation.

**What is the follow-up for household members of people being evaluated for novel coronavirus?**

Public Health – Seattle & King County makes contact with and monitors household members of individuals being tested, and takes actions to protect their health and the health of the community.

**Where can I get more information about the novel coronavirus?**

- For current information about this evolving public health situation, visit the CDC’s [2019 Novel Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) page.
- The Washington State Department of Health has established a call center to address questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington state, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call 1-800-525-0127 and press #.
- For local information, visit the following online resources:
  - Public Health — Seattle & King County blog [Why the current exposure risk is low from novel coronavirus](https://www.readywashington.org/2019-novel-coronavirus)
  - Questions and answers about a novel coronavirus in Washington:
    - Blog format and PDF format
    - [關於華盛頓新型冠狀病毒的問題和解答](https://www.readywashington.org/2019-novel-coronavirus) (Chinese, Traditional)
    - [关于华盛顿新型冠状病毒的问题和解答](https://www.readywashington.org/2019-novel-coronavirus) (Chinese, Simplified)
  - [Coronavirus, Travel and the Changing Situation](https://www.readywashington.org/2019-novel-coronavirus)
• Visit Tacoma-Pierce County Public Health Department's Human Coronaviruses page