

# Update on the COVID-19 Coronavirus

March 03 2020, Tuesday

This is an update for all Mount Sinai Health System employees on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Below, you will find information for all staff, visitors, and patients, as well as specific information for travelers.

It is important to remember that the fundamental advice about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself remains the same:

- The vast majority of people who contract COVID-19 will not require hospitalization; symptoms are often mild enough that one can recover at home. If you have flu-like symptoms, please do not come to work, but you only need to seek medical care if you develop life-threatening conditions like severe shortness of breath, changes in mental status, severe dehydration, or other complications. Contact your provider for more advice and call ahead if you plan to seek medical care.
- The steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 are generally the same as those for the flu.
- If you have not traveled to an area where COVID-19 is prevalent or been in close contact with a traveler, and you develop respiratory symptoms, it remains likely that you have a seasonal illness like the flu rather than COVID-19.

As always, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) remains your best source for up-to-date, detailed information about COVID-19.

We and our colleagues at other area health systems are working with the New York State Department of Health and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to be fully prepared.

## **Recommendations for all staff, visitors, and patients regarding respiratory illnesses, including flu as well as COVID-19:**

1. The best prevention is through washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
3. Stay home when you are sick;
4. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe;
6. The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19; facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of these diseases to help prevent the spread of the disease to others;

7. If you need to seek medical care for a respiratory illness, please call ahead to your health care provider and put on a face mask upon arriving at the facility.

**If you are traveling internationally:**

1. If you are traveling anywhere internationally, consider using the [U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) for updates on health and safety issues abroad.
2. For work-related international travel, please review [this information](#) about travel safety and how to register your trip.
3. Check the [CDC's list](#) of affected countries, as well as the [State Department's travel advisories](#), before embarking on your trip. The travel advisories may change from day to day so check them often. Be prepared to cancel your trip, especially if the government recommends against non-essential travel.
4. If you recently traveled to a country with ongoing person-to-person transmission of COVID-19, please notify your supervisor or Employee Health Services before returning to work. You may return to work as long as you are asymptomatic but you will have to check your temperature twice a day and monitor for upper respiratory symptoms for at least 14 days from the time you left for your return trip.
5. If you are returning from mainland China, you will be required to self-quarantine at home, and you will be subjected to a mandatory quarantine if you traveled to Hubei Province.

Marc Napp, MD, MS  
Senior Vice President, Medical Affairs  
Deputy Chief Medical Officer  
Mount Sinai Health System

Bernard C. Camins, MD, MSc  
Medical Director, Infection Prevention  
Mount Sinai Health System