

## FAQ's

Tulare County is actively responding to the spread of a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Cases of COVID-19 are also being reported internationally and in the United States.

### **How can people protect themselves?**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). This occurs through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Every person has a role to play. So much of protecting yourself and your family comes down to common sense:

- Washing hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.
- Following guidance from public health officials.

Please consult with your health care provider about additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself.

## Who is at Higher Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19?

Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:

- Older adults (65+)
- Individuals with compromised immune systems
- Individuals who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or health condition, it is important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease, including:

- Isolate at home and practice social distancing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay away from large gatherings and crowds.
- Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks.

It is also important that you listen to public health officials who may recommend community actions to reduce potential exposure to COVID-19, especially if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.

## What should you do if you think you're sick?

Call ahead: If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, and may have had contact with a person with COVID-19 or recently traveled to countries with apparent community spread, call your health care

provider or local public health department first before seeking medical care so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

### **What is Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals and humans. This novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a newly discovered coronavirus that has not been previously detected in animals or humans. The source of this virus is not yet known.

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Typically, human coronaviruses cause mild-to-moderate respiratory illness. Symptoms are very similar to the flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

COVID-19 can cause more severe respiratory illness.

### **What is the treatment for COVID-19?**

From the international data we have, of those who have tested positive for COVID-19, approximately 80 percent do not exhibit symptoms that would require hospitalization. For patients who are more severely ill, hospitals can provide supportive care. We are continuing to learn more about this novel coronavirus and treatment may change over time.

### **How is it decided whether a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 can self-isolate at home or must be confined to a hospital or elsewhere?**

Tulare County Public Health is working in partnership with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC, and making determinations on whether a person ill with COVID-19 requires hospitalization or if home isolation is appropriate. That decision may be based on multiple factors including severity of illness, need for testing, and appropriateness of home for isolation purposes.

## **What is the difference between COVID-19 and other coronaviruses?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. There are some coronaviruses that commonly circulate in humans. These viruses cause mild to moderate respiratory illness, although rarely they can cause severe disease. COVID-19 is closely related to two other animal coronaviruses that have caused outbreaks in people—the SARS coronavirus and the MERS (middle east respiratory syndrome) coronavirus.

## **Is California able to test for COVID-19?**

Twenty-one public health labs in California are testing for COVID-19. These labs include the California Department of Public Health's Laboratory in Richmond, Alameda, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Monterey, Napa-Solano-Yolo-Marin (located in Solano), Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sonoma, Tulare and Ventura County public health laboratories. The Richmond Laboratory will provide diagnostic testing within a 48-hour turnaround time. More public health labs will soon be able to test for COVID-19. This means California public health officials will get test results sooner, so that patients will get the best care.

## **Should public events be cancelled?**

The California Department of Public Health has determined that gatherings should be postponed or canceled across the state until at least the end of March. Non-essential gatherings must be limited to no more than 250 people, while smaller events can proceed only if the organizers can implement social distancing of 6 feet per person. Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people, while also following social distancing guidelines.

### **Is it safe to go to restaurants and bars?**

Tulare County public health officials have directed bars, night clubs, breweries and wine tasting rooms to close. Restaurants should focus on food delivery and takeout while maximizing social distancing for those who are inside their restaurant.

### **What is Social Distancing?**

Social distancing is a practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals who may spread certain infectious diseases. The key is to minimize the number of gatherings as much as possible and to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled. Although the Department of Public Health expects most events with more than 250 attendees to be postponed or canceled, we emphasize that the venue space does matter. Achieving space between individuals of approximately six feet is advisable. Additionally, there is a particular focus on creating space between individuals who have come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have very different travel patterns such as those coming from multiple countries, states or counties.

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

The California Department of Public Health, along with the CDC, does not recommend that healthy people wear masks at this time. However, masks are recommended to limit the spread of disease for people who are exhibiting respiratory symptoms.

### **What if I have symptoms?**

Patient: If a person develops symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough or shortness of breath, and has reason to believe they may have been exposed, they should call their health care provider before seeking care or call 2-1-1 for direct information. Contacting them in

advance will make sure that people can get the care they need without putting others at risk. Please be sure to tell your health care provider about your travel history. You can also take the following precautionary measures: avoid contact with sick individuals, wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

### **What should I do if I am unable to work after being exposed to COVID-19?**

Individuals who are unable to work due to having or being exposed to COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional) can file a Disability Insurance (DI) claim.

Disability Insurance provides short-term benefit payments to eligible workers who have full or partial loss of wages due to a non-work-related illness, injury, or pregnancy. Benefit amounts are approximately 60-70 percent of wages (depending on income) and range from \$50 - \$1,300 a week.

Californians who are unable to work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional) can file a Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim.

Paid Family Leave provides up to six weeks of benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages because they need time off work to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child. Benefit amounts are approximately 60-70 percent of wages (depending on income) and range from \$50-\$1,300 a week.

### **What is the state doing to protect our health?**

- California has been actively and extensively planning with our local public health and health care delivery systems. Here are some of the things we are already doing:

- As in any public health event, our Medical and Health Coordination Center has been activated and is coordinating response efforts across the state and preparing for possible community transmission.
- In coordination with the CDC, state and local health departments, we are actively responding to cases of COVID-19.
- The Public Health Department is supporting hospitals and local public health laboratories in the collection of specimens and testing for COVID-19.
- California activated the State Operations Center to its highest level to coordinate response efforts across the state.
- Governor Gavin Newsom requested the Legislature make up to \$20 million available for state government to respond to the spread of COVID-19.
- California made available some of its emergency planning reserves of 21 million N95 filtering facepiece masks for use in certain health care settings to ease shortages of personal protective equipment.
- We are providing information, guidance documents, and technical support to local health departments, health care facilities, providers, schools, universities, colleges, elder care and congregate living facilities and childcare facilities across California.
- California obtained approval to provide meal service during school closures to minimize potential exposure to the coronavirus. These meals are available at no cost to low-income children – and are not required to be served in a group setting – to ensure kids receive nutritious meals while schools are temporarily closed.
- The state directed mass gatherings be postponed or cancelled to slow the spread of the virus.
- The Franchise Tax Board is providing a 90-day extension to file California tax returns for taxpayers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- CalTrans launched a statewide educational campaign on more than 700 electronic highway signs, urging all Californians to be more diligent about containing the spread of the virus.
- The state is allowing local and state legislative bodies to hold meetings via conference calls while still meeting state transparency requirements.
- The California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency released guidance for homeless assistance providers in the state.
- The California Department of Public Health is coordinating with federal authorities and local health departments that have implemented screening, monitoring and, in some cases, quarantine of returning travelers.
- In coordination with state and local health departments, we have actively managed suspect and confirmed cases of COVID-19 patients.
- California worked in partnership with the federal government to aid in the safe return of 962 Californians from the Grand Princess cruise ship. This mission centered around protecting the health of the passengers, and ensuring that when the passengers disembarked, the public health of the United States, the State of California, and partner communities was protected.
- 24 million more Californians are now eligible for free medically necessary COVID-19 testing.
- The state is taking aggressive social distancing steps - bars, night clubs, breweries and wine tasting rooms should close and restaurants should focus on food delivery and takeout while maximizing social distancing for those who are inside their restaurant.
- California is recommending older Californians (65+) socially isolate in their homes.
- The state is providing safe, wrap around services to vulnerable residents who are isolating at home – ramping up existing meal delivery and home visiting services.

- The California Employee Development Department (EDD) is encouraging individuals who are unable to work due to exposure to COVID-19 to file a Disability Insurance claim. Californians unable to work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member can file a Paid Family Leave claim.
- The Governor removed the waiting period for unemployment and disability insurance for Californians who lose work as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- EDD is also encouraging employers who are experiencing a slowdown in their businesses or services as a result of the Coronavirus impact on the economy to apply for an Unemployment Insurance work sharing program.
- The Governor declared a State of Emergency to make additional resources available, formalize emergency actions already underway across multiple state agencies and departments, and help the state prepare for broader spread of COVID-19.
- The California Department of Public Health's state laboratory in Richmond and 20 other public health department laboratories now have tests for the virus that causes COVID-19.