

January 24, 2020

## 2019 Novel Coronavirus: Interim Guidance for Healthcare Professionals

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was reported from the area of Wuhan, China in December 2019. Most of the early cases were linked to a seafood and animal market, suggesting possible animal-to-person spread of the virus, but the virus is now being evaluated for person-to-person transmission. The market was closed on January 2, 2020. Chinese authorities imposed travel restrictions to/from Wuhan and other nearby cities as the death toll continues to rise. At least 26 people have died so far, with more than 830 infected people identified in China, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, South Korea, and Singapore. There now have been two confirmed cases in the US in Washington (Seattle) and Illinois (Chicago). Both travelers had been in Wuhan China recently. The World Health Organization (WHO) has not yet declared a global health emergency. However, 14 U.S. airports are currently beginning to screen passengers arriving from Wuhan for the 2019-nCoV, including JFK Airport in New York. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also issued on January 21, 2020, an [Update and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) in Wuhan China](#) for healthcare facilities and providers. In addition, the [NJ Department of Health](#) (NJ DOH) has provided information, as well as guidelines on [Novel Coronavirus 2019 \(2019-nCoV\) Clinical and Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts January 22, 2020](#). ***It is important for every healthcare professional and medical office to understand these guidelines in order to identify, manage, and treat potential Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for infection with 2019-nCoV.***

### What is 2019-nCoV?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, usually among animals, which rarely spread to infect people. However, the MERS-CoV (Middle Eastern respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) and SARS-CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) are two recent examples where it has spread to humans. 2019-nCoV is thought to be transmitted through the respiratory tract. Antibiotics can't be used because it is a viral pneumonia. At this point, there is no vaccine or specific treatment other than symptomatic care and comfort measures. The majority of patient deaths have been in elderly people, especially those with comorbidities and immune deficiency conditions.

### What are the Signs and Symptoms?

Symptoms of the 2019-nCoV may include runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat, fever, and a general feeling of being unwell. Healthcare providers and medical offices see many patients with these symptoms, so it is important to ask further questions in order to screen and identify PUI.

### Criteria to Guide Evaluation of PUI for 2019-nCoV

[Guidelines](#) have been developed by the CDC based upon what is known about MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV and are subject to change as additional information becomes available. Patients should be evaluated and discussed with public health departments on a case-by case basis if their clinical presentation or exposure history is not clear/uncertain. At this time the CDC recommends that patients who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a PUI:

- 1) Patient has a fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND in the last 14 days before symptom onset
  - a. Had a history of travel from Wuhan City China OR
  - b. Came in close contact with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV while that person was ill.
- 2) Fever or symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND in the last 14 days before symptom onset
  - a. Had close contact with an ill laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient.

### **Recommendations for Outpatient Management and Reporting**

If a patient being evaluated is thought to have the 2019-nCoV:

- Immediately mask the patient and place the patient in an exam room with the door closed. The patient should continue to wear a mask for the duration of the time being evaluated and if being transported outside the office.
- All healthcare personnel should follow standard infection control precautions and wear personal protective equipment (e.g., mask, gowns, gloves, etc.) when having direct contact with the patient.
- Healthcare professionals must report the information immediately to the local health department (LHD) where the patient resides. A listing of LHDs can be found at: <https://www.state.nj.us/health/lh/community/index.shtml#1>. All LHDs are available 24/7/365. In the event a healthcare professional cannot get in contact with the LHD then the case should be reported to the NJ DOH, Communicable Disease Service (CDS) at (609) 826-5964, Monday through Friday 8:00 AM-5:00 PM or on weekends, evenings and holidays at (609) 392-2020.
- If the public health official feels it is a suspected case, healthcare professionals may be asked to collect specimens from the patient or direct the patient to a local hospital where additional testing can be done.
- The LHD and/or healthcare provider should complete the [2019-nCoV patient Under Investigation \(PUI\) Short Form](#).
- All areas, where the patient was including waiting room, exam room etc., should be cleaned and sanitized to minimize further exposure.

### **Conventus Recommendations**

1. As a protection for your practice and your patients, offer face masks to patients. In addition, post a sign in your waiting and exam room(s) stating that patients can ask for a mask. See [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/ask\\_for\\_mask.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/ask_for_mask.pdf) for the *Ask for a Mask* poster from the NJ DOH.
2. When scheduling appointments:
  - a. Ask patients if they have had a history of travel to Wuhan City China.
  - b. For sick visits, ask patients if are experiencing any fever and acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and if they have traveled, or have a history of travel from Wuhan City China.
  - c. If a patient indicates they have traveled or are experiencing symptoms, follow the [Recommendations for Outpatient Management and Reporting from the NJ DOH](#).
3. Post signage throughout the office, including waiting areas, exam rooms and rest rooms about cough etiquette and hand hygiene. The CDC has various posters available:
  - a. *Cover your Cough and Clean You Hands*: <https://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/posters.htm>
  - b. *General Handwashing Posters*: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>
4. Provide a space and encourage patients with respiratory symptoms to use a mask and place them

Since this is an emerging health situation, current guidelines and recommendations continue to change. Conventus will monitor the guidance provided by the CDC and NJ DOH to help our members keep informed. As always Conventus members can contact the Practice Resources Department for any questions or assistance at (877) 444-0484 x7466.

### **Resources and References for the 2019-nCoV**

#### **NJ DOH**

- General Information: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>
- Surveillance Criteria and Testing for 2019-nCoV: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/NCov\\_LINCS\\_SurvCriteria\\_and\\_Testing\\_2019\\_nCoV\\_012220final.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/NCov_LINCS_SurvCriteria_and_Testing_2019_nCoV_012220final.pdf)

#### **CDC:**

- General Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Infection Prevention and Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/infection-control.html>

For more information please contact us at:

(877) 444-0484 x 7466 | [conventus@conventusnj.com](mailto:conventus@conventusnj.com) | [www.conventusnj.com/](http://www.conventusnj.com/)

---

DISCLAIMER: The information contained herein is intended for educational purposes only. NIP Management Co., LLC/Conventus takes reasonable efforts to provide accurate information but cannot guarantee its accuracy or that it meets local, state, or federal statutes, laws, or regulations. NIP Management Co., LLC/Conventus disclaims any and all liability for reliance upon the information contained therein. It is suggested that you consult your legal counsel or other professional consultant(s) if you have any questions about how it pertains to your specific situation.