

As the coronavirus outbreak continues, it is understandable that many feel confused and anxious. At times like this, it is more important than ever that we come together as a community to support one another, share information, and take action that is guided by public health evidence. Infectious disease specialist and public health leaders have been meeting daily on all levels of how our society as a whole may be impacted by the virus. Policies on issues ranging from travel to events to facility maintenance are all being examined in connection with recommendations by our local, state, and federal health agencies. Based upon the current evidence, our places of business, travel, schools, and health facilities are continuing with regular operations. As this is a constantly changing situation, we are developing and putting in place contingency plans and policies for upcoming NJPC work and training meetings.

About Coronavirus

Be mindful that symptoms of Coronavirus (medically known as COVID-19) include fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness such as cough and difficulty breathing. These symptoms may be similar to the flu or the common cold. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia and other complications, especially in infants, older individuals, and those with underlying health conditions. Our communities are seeing many cases of influenza and other common respiratory illnesses. Please remember the steps we take every day to help prevent any respiratory illness:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick.

If you have traveled recently or have been in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 and are experiencing the above symptoms please seek medical attention right away. Before you got to the doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and let them know of your recent travel and symptoms. Wear a mask if you need to leave your home when you are sick.

Some tips to protect your health:

- It's not too late to get the [flu shot](#). Remember, the flu is very common and can be quite severe.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing — do not use your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Clean high-touch surfaces with disinfectant wipes.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Take care of yourself and your community

During the cold and flu season, it is very important to take precautions to protect your health. Like the flu, symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough or shortness of breath.

As always, please stay home if you are not feeling well. Protecting the health and well-being of our community is a collective effort. You will not only speed your own recovery, but you will also prevent the possible transmission of any infection among your colleagues, classmates, and community.

More Information on COVID-19

If you are planning to travel, please check current travel advisories and restrictions [here](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends avoiding all non-essential travel to China and South Korea; the CDC recommends that older adults and those with chronic medical conditions consider postponing non-essential travel to Iran, Italy, and Japan. These recommendations are evolving, so please continue to check if you are planning to travel.

Be mindful and respectful

Finally, we have seen throughout history that public health emergencies and outbreaks have often led to a parallel spread of stigmatization of affected groups. As coronavirus cases have increased, some in our communities have experienced hostility or bias.

It is never acceptable that anyone does not feel welcomed or accepted in our communities. We must be vigilant of the social implications of this outbreak, including racism and xenophobia, which are also threats to the public's health.

References:

<https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/stealth-transmission-fuels-fast-spread-coronavirus-outbreak>

<https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/coronavirus-updates>

<https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/coronavirus-updates/about-covid-19>

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>