

Coronavirus Newsletter for Staff

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that typically cause mild illnesses like the common cold. The new, or novel, coronavirus causing illness known as COVID-19 is related to the other coronaviruses that have caused serious outbreaks in the past. Once such outbreak was SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) which was identified in 2003 spreading to two dozen countries before disappearing in 2004. MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) is another related virus that was identified in 2012 before spreading to other countries, including two cases in US.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus named “SARS-CoV-2” that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which has now been detected in 37 locations internationally, including cases in the United States. As of 2/27/20 there have been no confirmed cases in Montana.

How is it spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person

- Between people who are in close contact with one another who has the virus (within about 6 feet)
- Via 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
- It is also possible that a person can get the virus by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus is spread.

Symptoms?

For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

At this time CDC believes that symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk is considered low. However, any virus can become widespread and that may change the risk.

Treatment: No treatment has been identified at this time and no vaccine exists for this virus currently. Supportive treatment will be provided based on symptoms.

Wash Your Hands- Thorough and frequent hand washing is the best way to prevent many common infections. Scrub your hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds, rinse well, and turn off the faucet with a dry paper towel. You can also use an alcohol-based hand gel, rubbing it into your hands until hands are dry.

Keep your hand away from your face- Most viruses are passed by hand to hand contact or object to hand to face contact. So, in addition to washing your hands, try to consciously keep them away from your face.

Eat Right Sleep Tight- A poor diet and poor sleep both lower your immunity and make you more vulnerable to infections. A balanced diet that emphasizes fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and small amounts of lean protein works best for most people. On the other hand, the amount of sleep needed for a healthy immune system varies from person to person. In general, adults do the best on seven to eight hours of sleep a night. Older children and teens need more rest- between nine and ten hours every night.

Exercise Regularly- Regular cardiovascular exercise- walking, biking, aerobics- boosts your immune system. Exercise won't prevent infection, but if you do come down with a virus, you may have less severe symptoms and recover more quickly than those people who aren't as fit.

It is very important to remember that the gloves you wear need to be changed frequently. Wearing a pair of gloves for an extended period of time will not necessarily protect you. Each time you touch a door knob, door, light switch, keys, food slot, another person, etc. you need to make sure to change your gloves as you could have touched the virus at any time. Keep extra gloves and hand sanitizer with you. This will protect you as well as the inmates. Remember this is a small community out here and once one person gets the flu it can spread quickly.

Should you have any further questions,
Contact cornmedical@mt.gov; Sara Boutilier Managed Care RN 406-444-4761; Tonya Dempster Managed Care RN 406-444-4449; or Anita Thorpe DOC/CSD Infection Control Manager 406-846-1320 ext 2521

There is more information available at www.cdc.gov/flu or <http://dphhs.mt.gov/>.