

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19 IN THE HOUSTON AREA

Overview

- Although travel-associated COVID-19 has reached the Houston area, there is currently no evidence of community spread.
- For the general public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 remains low.
- If you have not been around anyone with COVID-19 or have not visited an ongoing outbreak area, you are currently not considered to be at risk.
- Public health departments identify close contacts of COVID-19 patients so they can be isolated, monitored for symptoms and quickly tested, if needed.
- People should practice routine healthy hygiene habits to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like COVID-19, such as washing hands frequently, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth, and staying home if sick.
- Call your healthcare professional if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.
- Your healthcare professional will work with your public health department and Center for Disease Control to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.
- There is no need to go the emergency room unless you have a medical emergency. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- Most people with COVID-19 will feel like they have a bad cold or the flu. Some people will require hospitalization. People who are at most risk for severe illness are elderly or have other health conditions.
- The Houston Health Department and Harris County Public Health routinely investigate and contain infectious diseases and are well-prepared to respond to COVID-19 to protect our community.

What Houstonians need to do:

Houstonians should go about their daily lives, but take certain precautions:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, use the elbow of your sleeve. Don't use your hands to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick and keep children home when they are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Get a flu shot. (Although the flu shot does not protect against COVID-19, it is flu season.)
- If you have fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, and recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone who has recently traveled to any of those areas, go to your doctor. Call first to let them know about your symptoms and travel history.
- If you have these symptoms, but no travel history, stay home and call your doctor.
- Receiving health care is not a public benefit identified by the public charge test.
- If a person does not have health insurance or a healthcare provider, they can call a [FQHC \(Federally Qualified Health Centers\)](#) for non-emergency needs and go to an emergency room for actual emergencies.
 - An FQHC provides primary care services, even if you don't have health insurance. You pay what you can afford, based on your income.
 - FQHCs do not deny services due to inability to pay. There are many FQHC locations in the Houston area.

What Houstonians do not need to do:

- Houstonians DO NOT currently need to limit travel within the city.
- Houstonians DO NOT currently need to avoid public gatherings and public transportation.
- Houstonians DO NOT currently need to change anything about where they get food or how it's prepared.
- There is no need to wear a face mask if you are not sick. Face masks are only recommended if directed by a health care provider.
- People wear protective face masks for many reasons, including seasonal allergies, pollution or protecting those around them from a common cold. They should not be harassed or targeted for wearing one.

Houston-specific COVID-19 updates, key messages, frequently asked questions, communication resources, rumor control, emergency preparedness tips and more is available at HoustonEmergency.org.

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