

Reinforce Infection Control in Light of Coronavirus

The “COVID-19” coronavirus outbreak will put the spotlight on ways to limit the spread of respiratory infections.

This coronavirus is thought to be transmitted by respiratory secretions...similar to other coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS.

Emphasize getting a flu vaccine each year...and use this coronavirus outbreak as an opportunity to stress infection control.

Reinforce proper hand hygiene. Keep in mind that frequent handwashing with soap and water is the best bet. Wash for 20 seconds...about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.

If that's not practical, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. They're effective against enveloped viruses, such as coronaviruses...but aren't yet proven to kill COVID-19.

Remind visitors to wash hands or use sanitizer when entering AND leaving rooms...and avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.

Clear up mask confusion. Caution that unnecessary use is leading to shortages. Follow your hospital policy.

For example, provide a mask during triage to patients with a suspected respiratory infection...to contain respiratory secretions.

On the other hand, discourage masks for most patients and visitors withOUT symptoms. Masks are too loose to keep all germs out...and viruses can get in through the eyes.

Expect the guidance for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to evolve as we learn more.

4/14/20 – This article was published before CDC released recommendations about cloth face coverings in public settings, available [here](#). Please keep in mind that guidance is changing quickly. Refer to the CDC for the most current recommendations.

3/13/20 - This article was revised to reflect the current population risk in North America. Please keep in mind that this is a rapidly changing landscape.

Key References:

- www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019 (2-28-20)
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html (2-28-20)
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/healthcare-supply-ppe.html (2-28-20)
- [www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](http://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak) (2-28-20)

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