



COVID-19 Update from Chief Rick Hoehstetter

A new coronavirus, dubbed COVID-19 was first identified in China and has entered the United States. Because COVID-19 is a new coronavirus, there is no established immunity to it, nor a vaccine or even an effective antiviral treatment available. Dr Amy Croton of the Ohio Board of Health feels that some of the existing antivirals may show some promise in treating COVID-19, so the last point may change in the months ahead. Also, there are a number of efforts to create a vaccine underway, although the required clinical trials and other regulatory steps involved in approval, once a vaccine is developed, may take up to a year or more to become available to the public, assuming production facilities can be ramped up quickly.

Because people have no immunity to COVID-19 and no effective treatments are forthcoming, experts strongly recommend the following prevention steps as the best present defense against COVID-19:

- Wash hands, specifically when entering and leaving home, before meals and of course when activities require it. Dr. Croton says that this action, while simple and apparently inconsequential, is in fact extremely important. COVID-19 may be highly contagious but it is not a very robust virus and hand washing is the most effecting antiviral technique available. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based waterless hand cleaner is also effective.
- Practice social distancing, which means maintaining at least three feet from others. This is the reason schools, sporting events, political rallies, and other public venues are being cancelled. It should be noted that family members living together are not included in this rule.
- People with underlying conditions of the heart, lungs, diabetics, and the elderly are particularly susceptible due to their compromised immunity. This group should consider very carefully making any trips outside the home to public spaces, even for shopping. If there is anyone else available to run errands for this group, it is extremely advisable to use this option.
- The Center for Disease Control does not recommend wearing an N-95 facemask, unless an individual exhibits symptom and then only to help prevent the spread of the virus to others. This appears to be the newest style in China, but it is not a particularly effective antiviral technique in daily life. It won't hurt, but please don't let it distract from the preceding points.
- According to Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a dry cough, a low-grade fever, and shortness of breath. Should these symptoms present, please remain at home and call a medical professional or a hospital emergency room. They will relay testing instructions.
- Dr. Fauci also says that COVID-19 is roughly ten times as lethal as some influenza infections. This means that most healthy people have a very good chance of a full recovery as long as supportive care is available when needed.

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- The current proscribed quarantine for potential exposure to COVID-19 is 14 days, so effective preparation dictates that people have enough food, medicines, and any other items required for daily living available on hand.
- COVID-19 in the US is a fast-moving issue and because of problems rolling out test kits, an unknown group of asymptomatic but contagious people are likely in circulation. While this group is expected to eventually become symptomatic, tracking their contacts once diagnosed with COVID-19 is virtually impossible. It would also help to explain why there are infections appearing in places where exposure cannot be traced to anyone already known to have contracted the virus.
- For the most current information on developments of the COVID-19 virus in Ohio, please log onto <http://Coronavirus.Ohio.gov> or call 614 995-5599.

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