

New Mexico Novel Coronavirus Update and Guidance (March 2, 2020)

This update is provided by the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) regarding the global outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Because **community spread** of COVID-19 has been seen in many countries around the world and now in California, Oregon and Washington, it is likely we will see community spread of COVID-19 in New Mexico. No cases of COVID-19 have been diagnosed in NM to date, but this will likely change.

The complete **clinical picture** of COVID-19 is not fully understood, but fever, cough and shortness of breath are the main symptoms. Most of the illnesses are mild and do not require hospitalization. Older adults and persons with some chronic medical conditions are more likely to have severe illness.

DOH is **working with healthcare providers** in the state to identify patients at risk of COVID-19, to provide testing, and to manage infection control procedures to minimize the potential spread of the virus from those who are sick. **Testing is available** now through the DOH State Scientific Laboratory (SLD) and, if patient testing criteria are met, throat and nasal swabs can be collected anywhere in the state and tested at SLD.

DOH has reviewed **pandemic preparedness plans** and adapted them for COVID-19. We are looking ahead and taking steps now, **in partnership with many others** in NM, to prepare for the monitoring and care of patients with COVID-19 should we have community spread in New Mexico.

If we have **widespread community spread** in New Mexico, we will consider closing schools for a period of time, canceling mass gatherings and encouraging employers to allow for teleworking where possible. These measures would be implemented to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in New Mexico.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing the spread of respiratory viruses and following these steps will help:

- Stay home when you are sick and limit close contact with other people except for the medical care that you need.
- Cover your cough and sneezes to reduce the spread of infectious droplets and wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol.
- Clean “high touch” surfaces daily with regular household cleaners.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- If you are not sick, still wash your hands frequently when you are in places where there may be other sick people and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

We do not recommend the use of **facemasks** to prevent getting infected with a respiratory virus, unless your healthcare provider has specifically recommended this for you. A facemask is most effective in limiting the spread of infectious droplets when worn by persons with respiratory symptoms.

Please visit the **NMDOH website** to stay up to date about COVID-19 in New Mexico <https://cv.nmhealth.org/>