

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVEN BELLONE
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

JAMES L. TOMARKEN, MD, MPH, MBA, MSW
Commissioner

TO: All EMS Providers and Firefighters in Suffolk County
All Ambulance Services and Fire Departments in Suffolk County

FROM: Nathaniel Bialek, BS, EMT-P, CCHP *NB*
Director, EMS & Public Health
Emergency Preparedness

DATE: January 23, 2020

RE: 2019 Novel Coronavirus – Respiratory Disease Precautions

With the increased national attention to the Novel Coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, and in consultation with the Commissioner of Health Services, and other local, state and federal public health officials, the EMS Division is transmitting this situational awareness bulletin to keep you informed and safe. As most people are aware the CDC has confirmed the first case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the United States in the state of Washington. The patient recently returned from Wuhan, China, where an outbreak of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus has been ongoing since December 2019.

With that being said, agencies and providers are reminded that universal precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of disease transmission to keep us, and our families healthy, and keep us available for service in our respective communities.

We should remember there are a host of other bacterial and viral communicable diseases circulating in the community that present with fever, cough and trouble breathing, including influenza, within the United States, and communicated into the United States from afar, through global travel.

- EMS providers should be especially vigilant when encountering any patient with fever, cough and trouble breathing and we encourage you to observe **Universal Precautions, circulate the air in the patient compartment during transportation, wash hands frequently, and decontaminate non-disposable patient care items and interior ambulance surfaces on a regular and frequent basis. This includes the use of gowns and gloves, eye protection and N95/N100 respirator on all providers and placing a non-rebreather oxygen mask with oxygen on patients.**
- Symptoms associated with the 2019 Novel Coronavirus virus have included **fever, cough and trouble breathing.**
- *Routine questions regarding recent travel history should become part of every patient assessment and reported to the receiving hospital. This includes specific question surrounding travel to Wuhan, China within the last 14 days, or being exposed to anyone who has traveled to Wuhan, China.*

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- Caution should also be used during droplet-producing procedures like positive pressure ventilation, suctioning, and administering nebulized medication. Initial patient assessments phases for History of Present Illness (HPI) and OPQRSTI should initially occur from about six (6) feet away from the patient, to ensure proper donning of PPE when indicated.
- *Hospital presentations should be made in all cases where patients exhibit signs & symptoms of fever, cough and trouble breathing, or influenza like symptoms, well in advance of arrival at the hospital, and should include a transmission that you are transporting a patient with fever, cough and trouble breathing. Depending on local conditions, you may be asked to remain in the ambulance until your patient can be triaged by emergency department staff, or you may be directed to an alternate location in the emergency department to transfer your patient.*

Exposure Control Plans should be reviewed and updated accordingly, so that members with an occupational exposure are appropriately evaluated and treated, if indicated.

In conjunction with Suffolk County FRES Dispatch and local dispatch centers, the use of the “FC” suffix (Fever & Cough) will continued to be added to emergency medical dispatch (EMD) determinant codes to give you as much pre-arrival information as possible about your patient(s). Recall that similar designation (“ID”) for Infectious Disease remains in effect when signs/symptoms indicate suspicion of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

Generally, a person who contracts the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) will develop symptoms after about 2-14 days of exposure with a range of 2-21 days. These symptoms include onset of fever, productive and non-productive cough and respiratory distress.

Risk Levels

High risk exposure includes any of the following:

- Direct care or exposure to air drop-lets of a 2019 Novel Coronavirus patient without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE);

Low risk exposure includes any of the following:

- Household member or other casual contact¹ with a 2019 Novel Coronavirus patient; and/or
- Providing patient care or casual contact¹ without high-risk exposure with 2019 Novel Coronavirus patients in health care facilities in Novel Coronavirus outbreak affected countries.

No known exposure includes:

- Persons with no known exposure were present in a 2019 Novel Coronavirus outbreak affected country in the past 21 days with no low risk or high risk exposures.

¹-Casual contact is defined as a) being within approximately 3 feet (1 meter) or within the room or care area for a prolonged period of time (e.g., healthcare personnel, household members) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (i.e., droplet and contact precautions—see Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations); or b) having direct brief contact (e.g., shaking hands) with an 2019 Novel Coronavirus case while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (i.e., droplet and contact precautions—see Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations).

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Assessment of suspected or possible exposure patient

- Initial patient assessments phases for History of Present Illness (HPI) and OPQRSTI/SAMPLE should initially occur from about six (6) feet away from the patient who is considered to be at risk, to ensure proper donning of PPE when indicated;
- HPI questions should include asking about travel history to the affected area; and if there is any close contact with anyone else who traveled to the affected area.

It is just as important to document pertinent negatives and positives. EMS agencies should take this opportunity to review their Occupational Exposure to Blood Borne Pathogens Plans, per OSHA's 1910.1030 requirements, and ensure that Universal Precautions are observed when there is the possibility of coming into contact with B-OPIM on any patient.

Protective Measures

If the patient meets the criteria of either high or low risk exposure or is a known 2019 Novel Coronavirus infected patient, then the following approach should be followed:

- Don fluid-impervious clothing covers, gloves, goggles, and fit-tested N95 mask (Wearing an N95 mask has shown to reduce the risk of infections in health care workers by about 85 percent.
- The performance of aerosol-generating procedures should be avoided whenever possible. Caution should be used during fluid-droplet-producing procedures like positive pressure ventilation, suctioning, and administering nebulized medication.
- If performing these procedures, PPE should include respiratory protection (fit-tested N95 or higher mask) and the procedure(s) should be performed mindful of avoiding contact with respiratory secretions;
- Soiled personal protective equipment (PPE) should be laundered in accordance with your agency plan;
- Disposable PPE discarded as red bag waste at the receiving hospital; and
- ***Hospital presentations should be made in all cases where patients exhibit fever, cough and trouble breathing or contagious disease signs & symptoms well in advance of arrival at the hospital, and should include a transmission that you are transporting a patient with fever, cough and trouble breathing, contagious disease symptoms or have risk factors for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. Depending on local conditions, you may be asked to remain in the ambulance until your patient can be triaged by emergency department staff, or you may be directed to an alternate location in the emergency department to transfer your patient.***
- Decontamination of non-disposable medical equipment and interior surfaces of ambulances should be performed in accordance with standard decontamination procedures using 10% sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution at 1-part bleach: 10 parts water (1/4 cup bleach: 1-gallon water). Personnel performing decontamination procedures should do so wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other precautionary measures to reduce the risk of transmission for bacteria and virus' include:

- washing your hands often with soap and warm water, particularly after doffing exam gloves;
- using alcohol-based hand cleansers, which are effective, if there is limited access to soap and warm water;
- avoiding people who are ill;
- staying home from work or school if you are sick;
- using a tissue when you cough, sneeze or spit, and dispose of the tissue in a covered trash bin;

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- keeping hands away from your face, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- decontaminating shared space often, paying attention to phone receivers, microphones, keyboards, steering wheels, dashboards, countertops, and office equipment;
- refraining from sharing personal items such as forks, spoons, toothbrushes and towels.

The EMS Division has a limited amount of N95 mask for distribution to agencies in need as a stop-gap-measure until agencies are able to obtain a sufficient amount of respiratory protection devices from their own vendors. If an agency is interested in obtain N95 masks at no charge, please contact the EMS Division Office at the below numbers. Please remember we have staff available weekdays, weeknights and weekend days.

**Main Office – 631-852-5080
Dina Wayrich – 631-852-4647**

Websites for additional information:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/ems/pdf/13-05.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/infection-control.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>

Please don't hesitate to call (631) 852-5080 or email nathaniel.bialek@suffolkcountyny.gov if you have any questions or require any additional assistance. We will continue to keep you informed from time to time as the situation evolves.



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