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## Novel coronavirus/COVID-19

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The novel coronavirus, which causes a disease known as COVID-19, is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [↗](#) the potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is very high. At this time, however, most people in the United States will have little immediate risk of exposure to this virus as it is NOT currently widespread in the United States.

Current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus will cause a pandemic, which is the worldwide spread of a new disease. This is a rapidly evolving situation and the CDC's risk assessment [↗](#) will be updated as needed.

**Symptoms:** Patients with COVID-19 have mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms [↗](#) that can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, according to the CDC [↗](#). There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Most infected people will recover on their own.

**Tips:** It's still cold and flu season, and the same practices [↗](#) that stop the spread of these common illnesses are recommended:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds [↗](#). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick (except to get medical care). Keep sick children home from school or day care.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. If you use a tissue, wash your hands afterward.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (like doorknobs and light switches). Regular household cleaners are effective.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.

**If you or a family member has traveled recently to an area of risk [↗](#), or if you think you may have been exposed [↗](#) to the virus**

**and have symptoms of respiratory illness, you should call the advice number on your Kaiser Permanente membership card for further instructions.** It's important to call us ahead of time rather than coming directly in to one of our facilities or making an appointment online. Calling ahead helps us direct you to the most appropriate care, and take precautions to protect other members, patients, and employees.

**Guidance for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness:**

Public health agencies recommend that people at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. This includes concert venues, conventions, sporting events, and crowded social gatherings.

People at higher risk include those:

- Over 60 years of age
- With underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- With weakened immune systems
- Who are pregnant

There is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19. In fact, most confirmed cases have occurred in adults. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult their doctor about whether their children should stay home. Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at risk for COVID-19 should call the advice number on their Kaiser Permanente membership card.

**Testing and costs:** Kaiser Permanente currently does not recommend testing people who are not showing symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, difficulty breathing). For patients with symptoms who meet the criteria, we will make appropriate arrangements for testing. **As a member of Kaiser Permanente, you will not have to pay for costs related to COVID-19 screening or testing.** We believe that cost should not be a barrier to screening or testing for our members who may have been affected by this virus. Kaiser Permanente will not charge member cost-sharing (including, but not limited to, copays, deductibles, and coinsurance) for all medically necessary screening and testing for COVID-19. This policy applies to the cost of the visit, associated lab tests, and radiology services at our hospital, emergency department, urgent care, and provider locations where the purpose of the visit is to be screened and/or tested for COVID-19.

In the event you are diagnosed with COVID-19, additional services, including hospital admission (if applicable) will be

covered and charged according to your normal plan coverage rules.

**Telehealth visits:** It's easy to get care and advice through our telehealth options — including phone, email, and video — without an in-person visit. To take advantage of these telehealth options, you should call the advice number on your Kaiser Permanente membership card for instructions.

**Prescriptions:** It's a good idea to fill your prescriptions through our mail-order service, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak, not only because you can avoid standing in line at the pharmacy but also because with most prescriptions you can get 3 months' supply for the price of 2 months. Sign up on [kp.org/rxrefill](https://kp.org/rxrefill) and receive your medications in about 3 to 5 business days. For urgent prescriptions, you should visit your closest Kaiser Permanente medical center pharmacy.

**Masks:** The CDC does not currently recommend the use of masks among the general public. Only health care professionals caring for COVID-19 patients, people who are sick with COVID-19, or in some cases people caring for patients who are sick with COVID-19 need precautions like a face mask to help limit their risk of spreading COVID-19. Accordingly, we will only provide masks to members and patients who are symptomatic when they come to our facilities. This helps us ensure that we have masks for the patients and staff who need them most urgently.

**Kaiser Permanente is committed to the health and safety of our members, patients, employees, and physicians.** We have been working on confronting highly infectious diseases for years, and we are confident we can safely treat patients who have been infected with this virus, with very little risk to our other patients, members, and employees. Staff at all our medical centers regularly drill using various emergency scenarios, including detection and treatment of infectious diseases, and have been advised about the CDC protocols to be used with this coronavirus. Additionally, as in all cases of emerging infectious diseases, the CDC's recommendations could change, so we are monitoring and following them closely. Please know you are in good hands with us.

For more information, please visit the CDC website [↗](https://www.cdc.gov) for the latest COVID-19 information.