

BCArc Coronavirus Fact Sheet & Guidance

March 11, 2020

What is the Coronavirus?

The Coronavirus is a respiratory viral infection which is generally spread through respiratory secretions (such as droplets from coughs and sneezes) from an infected person to another person. It may also be spread by touching infected surfaces and then touching your face. Remember 80% of Coronavirus patients have mild symptoms, and effective prevention strategies are available and very similar to those used to avoid the flu.

Symptoms of the Coronavirus include:

- Early symptoms can consist of chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose
- fever (temp above 100 degrees)
- coughing/chest congestion
- shortness of breath
- in severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs).

While most people have mild cases and recover from this infection, some cases can lead to severe illness or death. Older people and those with pre-existing medical problems seem to have a greater risk of severe complications.

Who is at greatest risk?

- People who have recently traveled overseas.
- People whose immune system is compromised.
- People over 60 years of age.
- People with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease or who are pregnant.
- People who have had contact with someone with a confirmed case of the virus.

Treatment: There is no specific antiviral treatment for the Coronavirus, other than supportive care and relief of symptoms. Currently, there is no vaccine available.

How do you know when to seek medical attention?

Communicate first with your primary care doctor if you have symptoms or have had direct contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis. Your doctor will give you further instructions regarding the need to seek any further treatment or

testing. You should contact your doctor if you are showing any of the symptoms listed above, especially if you have any of the identified additional risk factors. Before going to your medical appointment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your possible exposure to the Coronavirus.

Prevention:

- Very much the same as for cold and flu symptoms
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. (The time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice). Frequent hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Stay 3-6 feet away from someone coughing.
- Stay home if you are sick. Individuals with any flu-like symptoms and/or a temperature above 100 degrees should not come to a day program until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours and obtained a note from their doctor.
- Limit your physical contact (handshakes, hugs, etc.) as much as possible with everyone outside of your private circle whether they are symptomatic or not for the time being.
- Boost health by optimizing sleep, exercise, and limiting smoking.
- Frequently disinfect your cell phone and other surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, refrigerator handles, etc. that could be contaminated. This is an important and effective strategy to limit the spread of the virus.
- Don’t touch your face unless you have first washed your hands.
- People who fall within higher risk categories should limit their exposure to large group settings and public events for the time being.
- Masks have been determined not to be a particularly effective barrier to the virus unless you are caring for someone with a confirmed case of the virus

Where can I learn more?

The Federal Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19> and Berkshire Health Systems (<https://www.berkshirehealthsystems.org/coronavirus>) all have current and frequently updated information regarding the Coronavirus.

→ Please stay alert for updates, further information and guidance from Caroline and the Administrative team regarding the effects of the Coronavirus on BCARC’s operations and our ongoing agency response.