



Hunterdon County Department of Health



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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Seasonal Influenza: What Hunterdon County Residents Need to Know **March 2, 2020**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New Jersey state and local public health officials continue to closely monitor the outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). The outbreak first started in December 2019 in China, but cases have been identified in a growing number of other international locations including the United States. Currently, the virus sickened 43 individuals in the U.S. (17 travel related, and 26 person-to-person spread).

There are currently no cases in Hunterdon County or in New Jersey. Seasonal influenza is a higher risk than COVID-19 for our residents. The New Jersey Novel Coronavirus Call Center is open 24/7 and taking calls from the general public inquiries only. The call center can accommodate callers in multiple languages and be reached at 1-800-222-1222. This call center is not for clinicians and they should call their local health department for guidance.

Although we are still learning about the virus, symptoms include flu-like symptoms including a fever, cough and shortness of breath. Some patients – particularly the elderly and others with other chronic health conditions – may develop a severe form of pneumonia. Symptoms have varied from mild to severe. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear between 2 to 14 days after exposure. COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation, and for the most up to date information, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Based on current information regarding COVID-19 disease transmission, individuals at risk for developing infection are those with a history of travel to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Japan, or those who have direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. The immediate health risk to the general public in the United States is considered low at this time.

Due to the rapidly changing situation, travel recommendations and countries with various levels of travel alerts are subject to frequent updates. Please refer to the CDC website Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> for the most current information.

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is monitoring the situation closely and preparing guidance documents for all of New Jersey's local public health departments,

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hospitals, and all health care professionals. The Hunterdon County Health Department (HCHD) staff are following the evolving outbreak of COVID-19 and are prepared to investigate any reported cases of Coronavirus reported in Hunterdon County. HCHD is in contact with recent travelers to the affected region, assessing their risk for COVID-19 and providing guidance for monitoring signs and symptoms, in accordance with guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health.

The Hunterdon County Health Department is providing updated guidance and is in communication with schools, medical providers, first responders and businesses in Hunterdon County. HCHD staff track the presence of influenza and influenza-like illness through routine reports from the Emergency Department, long-term care facilities, and select schools in the County. The Health Department also receives reports from Hunterdon Medical Center of the number of positive influenza tests and RSV tests, a respiratory virus similar to influenza.

Hunterdon County Influenza activity information is sent weekly to the New Jersey Department of Health who then issues a weekly Influenza Report, providing information on the presence of illness in each county and statewide. In the most recent report, Hunterdon County and New Jersey are experiencing "High" flu activity, with the predominant strain as Influenza B.

Surveillance indicates that we have more visits to the hospital Emergency Department and positive flu tests than last year. The entire weekly report can be viewed online here: https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/flu/surveillance/flu_report_week_2020_06.pdf

While the Hunterdon County Health Department continues to track the outbreak of COVID-19, residents are encouraged to take steps to protect themselves against Influenza and other respiratory viruses currently present in New Jersey and Hunterdon County.

The best methods for preventing influenza and other respiratory viruses include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with others who are sick. Those who are ill should refrain from work or school until they are fever free for at least 24 hours, without using fever-reducing information (such as Tylenol and ibuprofen) and follow all sick policies.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, not your hands.
- Get a flu vaccine. It's not too late, most flu activity typically peaks between December and February and can continue as late as May.
- Review and follow CDC travel advisories when planning travel. If you become ill after returning

home to the United States, **call** your healthcare provider before going to a doctor's office or emergency department of a hospital. They may want to place a mask on you before you enter the building to protect other people. Travel guidance can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Limiting the spread of the flu virus in Hunterdon County remains a high priority. Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. In the 2018-2019 flu season an estimated 35.5 million people were sickened and 34,200 people died from influenza in the United States. The annual vaccine and proper hand hygiene is your best defense against the influenza virus.

Additional Important Information Can Be Found By Visiting:



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24-Hour Public Hotline (中文)

1-800-222-1222

Trained healthcare professionals are standing by to answer questions about coronavirus.
The call is **free**.

For Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

For Influenza information and updates

CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

NJ - <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml>

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