

CHA Key Messages

Public Health Guidance Key to Hospital Response in Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

January 27, 2020

1. **California hospitals take any outbreak of an infectious disease seriously. Caring for our patients — and protecting our employees, visitors and communities — are our top priorities.**
 - **Hospitals are working closely with state and federal public health officials** in California and across the country as patients are identified as being infected with the novel coronavirus.
 - **The safety and well-being of our patients, hospital employees, first responders, and our communities is our highest priority.** Hospitals are closely monitoring — and implementing as appropriate — the guidance issued by public health experts at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - **The situation is rapidly evolving.** The first U.S. cases were only identified late last week — and the identification of confirmed cases in California only occurred over the weekend.
 - While hospitals take the threat of a more widespread outbreak very seriously, **it's important to note that the CDC considers the risk of transmission to the general public to be low at this time.**
2. **Hospitals routinely plan for and train staff on properly responding to outbreaks of various infectious diseases.**
 - **California hospitals prepare for all types of emergencies every day — including those that affect public health.** Whether it's a serious flu season, a measles outbreak, or the emergence of a previously unseen illness, hospitals follow recommended infection control protocols issued by local, state, and federal health officials.
 - **The most current guidance to health care providers on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus includes the following steps:**
 - Obtain a travel history for all patients presenting with fever and acute respiratory illness.
 - Place signage, implement travel history screening at triage, and review procedures for immediately placing symptomatic patients with a positive

travel history to China in a surgical mask and private room — ideally in an airborne infection isolation room if possible.

- Immediately contact the local health department and your infection preventionist if a patient meets the CDC’s criteria for “person under investigation” (PUI).
- Make sure your facility’s infection control policies are consistent with the [CDC’s Interim Infection Control Precautions for Patients Under Investigation for Novel Coronavirus](#).
- Review procedures for collection of laboratory specimens for novel coronavirus testing and laboratory biosafety guidelines. Lab workers should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including disposable gloves, lab coat/gown, and protective eyewear when handling potentially infectious specimens.
- Questions about novel coronavirus also can be directed to CDPH at novelvirus@cdph.ca.gov.

3. Disaster preparedness is a way of life for California hospitals.

- **Hospitals must comply with a host of state and federal laws and regulations governing disaster preparedness.** Every hospital must have a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan that identifies known and potential risks and outlines appropriate mitigation strategies.
- **These plans**, which must be updated and reviewed at least every two years by CMS, **must include policies and procedures for responding to a public health event — including the outbreak of an infectious disease.**
- A hospital’s ability to respond to so-called “surge” events – when more patients than expected need to be hospitalized because of a disease outbreak or other disaster – also must be detailed in its Emergency Operations Plan.