



# WELCOME MD

The medical professionals at WellcomeMD share the same concerns many of you have about the spread of the strain of Coronavirus known as COVID-19.

As of March 4, [the CDC is reporting](#) 80 cases of the virus in 13 states, including nine people who have tragically passed away as a result of the disease. The disease has the full attention of the health world, including us at WellcomeMD.

While many, including the CDC, are working diligently on studying the virus, there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 or antiviral treatment available. We hope its spread will be reasonably contained. However, there are many precautions you can take to help prevent the spread of disease, prepare for a potential widespread outbreak and treat the symptoms associated with COVID-19.

We recommend the following:

- Be even more diligent about the normal precautions you would take during cold and flu season. This includes:
  - **Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds**, especially after using public restrooms, coughing or sneezing
  - Using disinfectant wipes when available, such as at a grocery store
  - Keep a bottle of hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol for use in your car and at home
  - Use a knuckle or back of your hand to touch light switches or open doors and avoid shaking hands
  - If possible, cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue and discard rather than into your hands or elbow
- Consider purchasing surgical masks and latex/nitrile gloves in the event of a more widespread outbreak. The purpose of these masks is to prevent you from touching your nose or mouth, which many of us do dozens of times a day

without knowing it. This is the most common way any virus can infect you.

These masks also allow those showing cold or flu symptoms to **help prevent spread of the disease**. As you may have noticed, we already keep masks available to our patients during normal cold and flu season.

- Consider purchasing zinc lozenges in the event of a more widespread outbreak. Zinc lozenges can be effective in preventing viruses from multiplying in your throat at the onset of cold-like symptoms.
- If you take specific medications, particularly blood pressure medications, **consider ordering at least a 30-day supply**. Many of these medications contain ingredients manufactured in China and we could face a potential shortage if there is a more widespread outbreak.

These precautions, including avoiding contact with anyone exhibiting cold and flu symptoms, become even more important when traveling. Currently, the CDC has posted travel notices for the following areas:

- China
- South Korea
- Venezuela
- Italy
- Iran
- Japan
- Hong Kong

WellcomeMD requests that you contact our office if you plan on visiting us within two weeks of returning from one of these areas. If you start to experience cold and flu symptoms after visiting one of these areas, **please contact your physician immediately**.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu and include fever, cough, mucus, shortness of breath, sore throat and headache. If you have traveled to any of the outbreak areas or believe you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 and begin to experience symptoms, your physician will work with the state's public health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Testing involves the collection of nasal swabs, throat swabs, phlegm and blood samples that are then sent to the health department's lab.

If you need advice on future travel, especially if you feel your age or preexisting conditions make you more susceptible to disease, do not hesitate to contact your physician.

**Currently, your risk for infection of COVID-19 is considered very low.** If you have not traveled to Asia, it is unlikely that your cold and flu symptoms are connected to a COVID-19 infection.

However, this situation is rapidly evolving and we will continue to update you with additional recommendations as it develops. In the meantime, please take precautions to help prevent to spread of cold and flu and reach out to us if you have any questions or are experiencing cold and flu-like symptoms.

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