



Take Care of Yourself

Information from Austin College Health Services

*As Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases rise in Texas and across the U.S., published numbers can look frightening. Remember that most people recover from this infection; however please note we have found that **ALL age groups are at risk of serious infection**. Here, I remind you of some facts about this disease and what you can do to stay well and help prevent the spread of infection during this global health crisis. **UPDATE: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has now issued the guideline to wear cloth facial coverings if you are away from home.** See information below under Social Distancing. **Note that each subject heading below links to the CDC website for more information.***

if you have questions or concerns, you may reach me at roowellness@austincollege.edu. Remember to continue social distancing and wash your hands often as we seek to slow the number of cases of infection.

Lenora Hatch, MS, APRN, WHNP-BC
Director of Health Services
903.813.2247

Some General Information:

- The virus originated in animals and spread to humans. Humans then began to spread the virus to one another.
- **All age groups are at risk of serious infection.**
- The elderly and those with underlying health issues are at greater risk.
- Individuals who have the infection but do not have symptoms can spread the disease, exposing others, including high-risk individuals.

SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

Maintaining distance from others can help minimize the spread of infection and illness:

- **Stay 6 feet away from others.**
- **NEW CDC GUIDELINE** Wear cloth face coverings if you are away from home and cannot ensure the 6 feet distance from others. Cloth facial coverings likely will not prevent a person from getting the virus, but they prevent those with infections but no symptoms from spreading it. Lots of DIY videos for making facial coverings are available on YouTube, including how to fold and use a bandana. Or see [CDC instructions](#).
- **Remain at home except for essential trips to pick up needed supplies.**
 - Many businesses (gyms, barber shops, restaurants, etc.) are closed to prevent gatherings where infections could be spread.
 - Many grocery stores are limiting the number of people who can be in their building at one time.
 - Most restaurants are open only for drive through or pick up orders.
 - All non-essential medical activities such as elective surgeries or dental procedures have been stopped to save gloves, masks, and gowns (personal protective equipment) for healthcare providers.
- **Wash your hands often** for 20 seconds with soap and water. Or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. **Clean your hands with alcohol sanitizer** before going into the Dining Hall.
- **Disinfect frequently touched surfaces** (cell phones, door knobs, stair rails, light switches, steering wheels, etc.)
- **Travel into the U.S.** is restricted to returning U.S. citizens and permanent residents (see CDC travel alerts).
- **Travel into Texas** from certain states (Louisiana and New York included) requires mandatory quarantine at home for 14 days to avoid the spread of infection.

SYMPTOMS OF THE VIRUS

COVID-19 is more than a sore throat and stuffy nose; it manifests as a lower respiratory illness. Some people will have pneumonia and great difficulty breathing. General symptoms include:

- Fever greater than 100.4
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
 - Some will be sick enough to require oxygen or a ventilator to assist with breathing.
- Fatigue
- Other less common symptoms include headache, runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhea.
- **Some people will have no symptoms or feel only slightly ill.**

HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS

- **Close contact (within 6 feet)** with someone who has the infection and is talking or coughing. Remember some people will not know they have the infection.
 - Just as with the flu, people can spread the virus several days before they become symptomatic.
- **Touching surfaces** that have been coughed on or touched by someone who has the virus on their hands (from coughing or touching their mucus membranes).
- **Touching your face** (eyes, nose, or mouth) after touching contaminated surfaces.
- Less frequently, the virus spreads through the feces of someone who has the virus, such as diaper changes or through contaminated water sources.
- **Symptoms usually show up 2-14 days after you are exposed.**
- The virus is not spread by eating food or drinking water from a municipal water source.

How long can the virus live on surfaces?

- 2-3 hours in a room where the person has been talking or coughing
- 24 hours on cardboard
- 2-3 days on stainless steel and plastic

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS

- If you have been exposed, you must **self-quarantine for 14 days.**
- If you have symptoms, you **must isolate at home** until you are fever free, your symptoms have improved and you have gone at least 72 hours without medication, *and* it has been at least 7 days since your symptoms started.
 - That means no visitors and do not leave your home unless you are seeking healthcare.
 - Use a mask or facial covering if you must be around others.
- Healthcare professionals ask that you **call before going to a clinic or the ER** so they can instruct you on how to enter and so they are prepared for you.
- **Check with your physician by phone** if your symptoms worsen.
- If you have a pet, have someone else care for it. If this is not possible, avoid kissing or allowing the pet to lick your face. Wash your hands frequently.
- Self-care is similar to that for the flu:
 - **Drink fluids**
 - **Monitor fever and treat if greater than 100.4**
 - **Rest**
 - **Good nutrition**
 - **Wash your hands frequently**

Cases of infections are tracked by local health departments. Those who have been in contact with a person known to have the infection are notified. For privacy reasons names of infected persons are not published.

See the [CDC Recommendations](#).

A Self Check is also available on this page to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care.

Flattening the Curve

To flatten the curve is to slow the occurrence of new cases of infection—accomplished by adhering to the guidelines of social distancing and the close of nonessential businesses, etc.

- If we slow the rate of infection, the health care system will not be overwhelmed and care will be available to those who become ill.
- Many areas of the world and the U.S. have run out of hospital beds and supplies due to the high number of people infected and seriously ill.
- Texas is behind most of the states with rates of infection. However, there are some areas of the state that have a significant number of infections. Dallas and Harris counties are examples.
- Grayson County has a few confirmed infections. Local health department officials, as well as Austin College leadership, are carefully watching the numbers.

This information is provided to help us all better understand this disease and how to prevent its spread.