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## There are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the CNMI as of Monday, March 9, 2020 at 3:45PM

March 6, 2020 12:04PM

The CHCC would like to advise the public that the suspected COVID-19 case mentioned in a health advisory released on Thursday, March 5, 2020 (CHCC-PR-20-056) has been confirmed negative for COVID-19 through additional clinical assessment and extensive consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The patient presented with additional symptoms that are not consistent with COVID-19, and was diagnosed with a different upper respiratory illness.

### Situation Summary

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was first identified in Wuhan City in the Hubei Province of China in December 2019. There have been thousands of cases reported in Wuhan and other areas in China, and cases are being reported internationally including in the mainland US. Over 3,000 deaths have occurred, mostly in China. However, other countries are reporting increasing numbers of cases, notably Italy, South Korea, and Iran.

Globally, reported illnesses in people with COVID-19 have ranged from mild (no or few signs and symptoms), to severe, including death. These findings are consistent with other coronaviruses, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

### Transmission *(from the CDC)*

Current understanding about how the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

COVID-19 is an emerging disease and there is more to learn about its transmissibility, severity, and other features and what will happen in the United States.

#### Common symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

*If you or anyone you know has traveled to an area affected by a COVID-19 outbreak, or have been in close contact with an infected individual from any of these areas, and feel sick with these symptoms, please seek medical attention. Before you go to the doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. You can call the CHCC at (670)234-8950 and ask for the surveillance unit.*

#### How can I protect myself?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus and through personal hygiene measures:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
4. Stay home when you are sick.
5. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

According to interim guidance from the WHO on the use of masks in the community, released on January 29, there is no evidence that wearing a mask is a useful precaution to protect non-sick people. In fact, the WHO cautions that wearing a mask can give you a false sense of security and cause you to neglect other essential measures such as hand hygiene. Wearing a mask may be helpful only if combined with other steps to protect against illness. Additionally, wearing a mask if you are having symptoms may be helpful, because the mask provides an additional layer of protection against coughing and sneezing, similar to how a tissue would be used. It is important that proper mask hygiene and disposal practices are followed.

#### Ongoing Preparedness Measures in the CNMI:

- Following a proclamation by the President of the United States on January 31, 2020, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued restrictions on flights carrying passengers from mainland China. US citizens who traveled to China within 14 days of their arrival in the US will be directed to one of several airports with advanced public health screening capabilities. They will also be subject to up to 14 days of mandatory quarantine, either in a health facility or in home quarantine depending on where they traveled in China. Generally, foreign nationals (other than immediate family of US citizens, permanent residents, and flight crew) who have traveled in China within 14 days of their arrival will be denied entry into the United States.
- The CHCC Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP) surveillance unit is working with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), the Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA), the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), and other agencies on conducting screening of incoming passengers from outbreak areas.
- Protocols have been established around transportation, isolation, and care of a suspected case of COVID-19, should such a case present in the CNMI.

For more information, please contact the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP) surveillance unit at (670)234-8950

## Latest News

[CHCC Health Advisory: COVID19 Update 7 \(3/5\)](#)

[CDC Health Alert Network Update \(2/28\)](#)



[CHCC Health Advisory: COVID-19 Update - Low Priority Suspected Case Confirmed NEGATIVE \(2/21\)](#)

[CDC Situation Summary, Updated 2/19](#)

[WHO Situation Report 29 \(2/18\)](#)

[CHCC Health Advisory: Coronavirus Update 5 \(2/10\)](#)

[CHCC Health Advisory: Coronavirus Update 4 \(2/4\)](#)

[CLICK HERE](#) for a list of all CHCC press releases

## Resources

[Downloadable flyer on COVID19 \(PDF\)](#)

[Downloadable poster on COVID19 \(PDF, 11x17\)](#)

[Downloadable poster on handwashing \(PDF, 11x17\)](#)

[Downloadable flyer on handwashing \(PDF\)](#)

[Home Care Guide - Stay Home When You Are Sick! \(PDF\)](#)

[CDC CARE Booklet for people returning home from affected areas \(PDF\)](#)

[WHO: When and how to use masks](#)

[Short comic on protection against 2019-nCoV \(PDF\)](#)

[Interactive map of the outbreak updated by Johns Hopkins University](#)

[Information on COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[Information on COVID-19 from the World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

Last Updated:3/9/2020 3:45PM



### COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

In 1978, the CNMI Department of Public Health was formed under the executive branch of government. Over the next thirty years it came to operate the sole territory hospital and emergency department, several outpatient clinics, a dialysis unit, ancillary services, behavioral health services, and all public health functions.

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