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Subject: Coronavirus (COVID-19) information
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Good afternoon,

New developments around the state this weekend and today regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are making prevention increasingly a topic of conversation. That likely includes questions about the spread and risk of exposure as a city employee and in your personal travels.

Information is coming into the city on a regular basis from public health experts. The focus of federal, state, and local health experts remains on prevention and equipping people with the tools to keep from contracting and spreading COVID-19.

Health experts are urging people to follow similar cold and flu season practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or, if not available, use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

If you are experiencing cold and flu-like symptoms, we are encouraging you to use your judgment and stay home and contact your physician if necessary. The federal Centers for Disease Control is also advising local physicians to consider the following risk factors as indicators: recent travel to one of five heavily impacted countries or exposure to someone with the virus.

Beyond prevention steps, we have compiled answers, based on briefings with public health officials and from srhd.org/covid19, to other questions you may be asking or that may be asked of you:

What is novel coronavirus?

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus strain that has only spread in people since December 2019. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new virus, and it has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes
- In rare cases, contact with feces

How severe is COVID-19?

Experts are still learning about the range of illness from COVID-19. Reported cases have ranged from

mild illness (similar to a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires hospitalization. So far, deaths have been reported mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.

What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. COVID-19 symptoms include the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhea (rare)

Who is at risk for COVID-19?

Currently, the risk to the general public is low. At this time, there have been a small number of individual cases in the U.S. To minimize the risk of spread, health officials are working with healthcare providers to promptly identify and evaluate any suspected cases.

Travelers to and from certain areas of the world may be at increased risk. See the [latest travel guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is the city doing to prepare?

City leaders, including Mayor Nadine Woodward and City Administrator Wes Crago, are receiving regular briefings from our community's health experts. They will work with the City Council to provide City resources to help our community respond.

The City plans for and routinely responds to emergencies within our community, from cleaning up after storms and to responding to public safety concerns. As part of the current concern, the City is updating its Infectious Disease Response Plan to include guidance on COVID-19.

We are developing protocols for our firefighters and police officers so they can safely respond to calls for service. We are considering the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Training is underway for local non-profit organizations who serve those experiencing homelessness.

Our plans also define how critical public services, like the delivery of clean drinking water, weekly garbage pickup, and processing of wastewater, will continue uninterrupted.

The City's work will evolve as conditions change. If needed, the City will work with the Spokane Regional Health District to implement additional measures, like social distancing.

Are people in Spokane sick with COVID-19?

Provide Sacred Heart Medical Center has treated four patients in its Special Pathogens Unit designed for patients with highly infectious diseases. All four patients arrived in Spokane for treatment after being repatriated. None of the four are from Spokane.

What should I do if I have the symptoms associated with COVID-19?

Contact your physician or an urgent care facility for evaluation and treatment. The symptoms

present similarly to the flu. Both illnesses require consultation with a physician for treatment. In addition to having the symptoms, a physician will look for other risk factors including recent overseas travel or any exposure to someone who may have COVID-19.

How do I get more information?

The Spokane Public Health District has a collection of resources online at srhd.org/covid19 or you can contact the Washington State Department of Health at 800-525-0127 and press #.

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