

CORONA VIRUS AWARENESS AND RESPONSE

By now most people are aware of the Coronavirus epidemic that began in Wuhan, China late last year. Although there are few cases originating within the U.S. at this time, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) anticipates there will probably be an increase in cases at some point. Regional Health Departments are preparing and urge caution and common sense in preparing for the possible spread of the virus formally known as COV SARS-CoV2 and the corresponding disease as COVID-19.

There is no treatment for this Coronavirus. Most cases are mild and self-limited with symptoms including fever, dry cough, fatigue (similar to the flu). We treat the symptoms as we do for the flu. It is important to know that this virus is not the flu and a person could be infected with both viruses at the same time which would make the disease more severe, therefore, it is important to get the flu vaccine (it is not too late).

Precautions are the same as with the flu:

- Cover your mouth when coughing/sneezing
- Wash hands with soap and water (hand sanitizers must be at least 60% alcohol to work)
- Dispose of used tissues properly
- Stay well rested and nourished to support a healthy immune system
- Stay home if you are sick
- Get the flu shot

The virus spreads person to person. As more cases are occurring in more countries the virus may reach pandemic status, but remember, we have an influenza pandemic every year. Maryland has high influenza activity at the present time.

Preparedness is a good idea especially if the household has very young children (less than one year of age) or individuals over 65 should take extra precautions because their immune systems are weaker and slower to respond to infections. Individuals who are currently or who have recently had chemotherapy or who have respiratory disease should also take extra care. A two week supply of grocery and basic needs, including paper products and cleaning supplies may be kept on hand. Be sure you have at least a two-week supply of medication(s). Update your over-the-counter medications, such as acetaminophen and other pain and fever medications you typically take for colds or flu. Be sure you have a working thermometer and know how to use it.

If you have a respiratory infection and experience shortness of breath, call your physician. They may have specific instructions to avoid exposure to other patients. If you are planning travel within or outside the U.S., consult [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for up-to-date site-specific travel recommendations. Think about trip insurance should you have to cancel the trip due to illness.

Bishop Sutton and I remind you that communion in either kind is complete, one need not take both bread and wine. If you are concerned about sharing the common cup, you may elect to take only bread. While Bishop Sutton has recommended the chalice minister do all intinctions on the theory that only one hand is in the cup that way, I do not agree that this is the best way to avoid spread of virus because the chalice minister will then have his/her hands near everyone's mouth. If you wish to instinct, please do so yourself but be careful to keep from contacting the wine with your fingers. I personally have no hesitation of sharing the common cup unless I have a cold myself, in which case I instinct. Sharing the

peace should continue according to your comfort level – many already wave to one another, signal the peace sign, or do an elbow bump if they have a cold, and you know that I do not usually shake anyone's hands either at the peace or the door because airborne viruses spread very efficiently hand to hand/

We will continue to monitor the situation and will let you know should the situation change. If you are seeking reliable factual information, I recommend www.cdc.gov.

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