

N. M. healthcare providers take preventive action to avoid Novel Coronavirus

Written by Staff Reports

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Cases seen in Western U. S.

The New Mexico Department of Health began alerting healthcare providers to be proactive and vigilant concerning novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), Jan. 22. Travelers returning from trips abroad and showing fever and respiratory symptoms may have been affected.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing respiratory illness in people and others circulating among animals including camels, cats and bats. While originally thought to be spreading from animal-to-person, it is now believed to be spreading from person-to-person. It's unclear how easily this virus can be contracted between people.

ABC News reported Jan. 30 that the first case of human-to-human coronavirus has been reported in Chicago Ill.

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Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim are encouraging members of the Navajo Nation to be aware and take precautions of the spread of the novel coronavirus, first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

The first U. S. case was confirmed in Washington State. Jan. 21. Another case has been reported in Maricopa County, Ariz.

Kathy Kunkel, Dept. of Health secretary, says, "It's important everyone understand there are currently no cases detected in N. M., and cases are not expected to be directly imported in the state. However, our New Mexico's medical providers need to be attentive to every patient's travel history and symptoms."

Symptoms of the virus may include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath. It can take up to 2 to 14 days for the virus to become active after exposure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say there is currently no vaccine available for the virus.

"As we continue to closely monitor the coronavirus, we caution our Navajo people and encourage them to be aware of the growing spread of the virus. This is a serious public health concern that must be shared with all people. We ask that you share information with you children, elders, and others who may not have access to information via internet, television, and other means. It's critical that everyone take precautions and continue to learn more about the coronavirus," Nez emphasized.

The World Health Organization encourages people to avoid close contact with others showing symptoms of respiratory illness, such as coughing and sneezing. Wash your hands with warm water and soap often. Stay home if you are sick, and minimize long-distance travel.

As of Jan. 21, more than 300 laboratory-confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV infection in six countries, including six deaths, have been reported to the World Health Organization (WHO).

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Any remaining travelers arriving from Wuhan are now being screened for fever and respiratory symptoms at airports in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City, with Atlanta and Chicago preparing to begin screening as well. These sites were chosen because they are considered to be the most likely ports of entry for travelers arriving from Wuhan.

The New Mexico Department of Health has added a page to its website, NMHealth.org, to provide [the latest information and answers to frequently asked questions](#) about the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

For this and other answers to frequently asked questions, visit ***nmhealth.org/about/erd/ideb/nCoV/***.

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