

## Facemasks are not the answer

Written by Staff Reports  
Friday, 06 March 2020 11:02

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### **NMDOH advises against facemasks to prevent Covid-19**

The New Mexico Department of Health continues to monitor and respond to the novel coronavirus, also referred to as COVID-19, outbreak in China and around the world. China has reported over 40,000 confirmed cases that have been identified in 24 countries, including 15 cases in the US. There have been no cases of novel coronavirus diagnosed in New Mexico at this time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released new guidance on the use of personal protective equipment, including masks and respirators. Currently, there is a decrease in personal protective equipment exports from China and India and an increase in demand due to the outbreak.

There are plans to increase manufacturing globally, but in the meantime, the CDC has made the following recommendations regarding prevention of the novel coronavirus:

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The general public should not use facemasks. Instead, everyday preventative actions should be used, such as washing your hands, covering your cough and staying home when you are sick.

Patients with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection should wear a facemask when seeking healthcare, or when around people.

Healthcare personnel should wear personal protective equipment when caring for novel coronavirus patients, and should be trained and fit-tested for N95 respirators.

Currently, the risk of exposure with travel to any country besides China is low. NMDOH asks all persons returning from China to call our 24/7/365 "Epidemiology Hotline" at (505) 827-0006 for guidance on how to protect yourself and your community from the novel coronavirus, even if you are not sick.

We also encourage healthcare providers to continue to be vigilant with regards to COVID-19, particularly with travelers returning from China and presenting with fever and lower respiratory symptoms, like a cough and shortness of breath.

"It's important to note that there are currently no cases detected in New Mexico," NMDOH Secretary Kathy Kunkel said, "and there is no need for the general public to use facemasks to prevent novel coronavirus infection."

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, with some causing respiratory illness in people and others circulating among animals, including camels, civet cats, and bats. While early cases are thought to have spread from animal-to-person, some person-to-person spread is happening in China. Person-to-person transmission has also occurred in the U.S., in the respective spouses of two known cases which included travel to China. It is still unclear how easily this virus can spread between people.

The CDC reports that based on current information, the immediate health risk to the general American public is low.

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Healthcare professionals who suspect COVID-19 should immediately notify infection control personnel at their facility and contact the New Mexico Department of Health at: (505) 827-0006.

***For more information: Visit the CDC FAQ page at: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html). Updated information on the virus can be found on the CDC website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)***