Portage County Combined General Health District

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Press release
2019 novel Coronavirus   March 10, 2020

What is Portage County doing to respond to 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

The Portage County Health District has been working with Kent City Health Department, Portage County Emergency Management Agency, and its community partners for <u>years</u> to plan a strongly coordinated community response to public health emergencies using the national Incident Command Structure. The Incident Command Structure, including the Joint Information Center (JIC), is an efficient and well-planned way to prepare for and respond to public health and safety concerns.

In response to the public health concern of the 2019 novel Coronavirus, the Joint Information Center, or JIC, has been activated in Portage County.

- This means designated Information Officers at several community agencies come together to ensure we are **communicating effectively between agencies and with the public** about COVID-**19. This group also ensures that local residents, families, students, healthcare providers, and first responders have the most up-to-date information about COVID-19.**
- The JIC includes: Portage County Health District, Kent City Health Department, Kent State University, Hiram College, NEOMED, Portage County Emergency Management Agency, UH Portage Medical Center, AxessPointe, and local school systems.

New information (as of 3/09/20) on COVID-19:

As of March 9, 2020, **there are three confirmed cases in Cuyahoga County Ohio, five persons under investigation in Ohio, and 255 persons under public health supervision.** For the most up-to-date numbers for Ohio, go to https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/Novel-Coronavirus/welcome/.

On March 9, 2020, the Governor of the State of Ohio declared a state of emergency to protect the well-being of the citizens of Ohio from the dangerous effects of COVID-19.

As of March 8, 2020, Ohio received the ability to test individuals at risk for COVID-19. Clinicians will work with local and state health departments to determine need for testing.

Due to community spread of the virus, CDC has issued Travel Health Notices of level 2 (CDC recommends that older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel) for Japan and level 3 (CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel) for China, Iran, South Korea, and Italy. Entry into China and Iran has been suspended. For additional travel guidance, go to the CDC website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is high, both globally and to the U.S. **Risk to the general public remains low.**

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans.

How is it spread?

COVID-19 can easily spread from person to person. The virus is spread between individuals who are in close contact with each other (within about six feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is also possible for an individual to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

How can I protect myself?

CDC continues to recommend Americans use typical infectious disease precautions, just as those used to prevent cold or flu:
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eyes with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are ill.
- Clean and disinfect all "high-touch" objects and surfaces every day.

What you need to know:

If you have recently traveled to **China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea** or other outbreak areas and you have symptoms of novel coronavirus (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), **seek medical care right away. Call your healthcare provider BEFORE arriving and tell them your symptoms and travel history.**

For general questions about COVID-19, call the Ohio Department of Health call center at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH. The call center is open 7 days a week from 9:00am-8:00pm.

Additional information on the Coronavirus, including resources for health care workers, community and faith-based organizations, etc. can be found on the Portage County Health District website at www.portagehealth.net, the Ohio Department of Health website at: https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.