



COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions*

Updated April 4, 2020

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China, and which has now been detected internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2,” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

[COVID-19 terminology](#)

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common signs of infection can include, **but are not limited to**, fever, cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties, diarrhea, headache and fatigue. There have been reports of symptoms like losing your sense of smell or taste, but these are not consistent across the population. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. Elderly persons may not show the common symptoms described above. Atypical symptoms may include new or worsening fatigue, new dizziness, diarrhea or sore throat.

What can I do to protect myself?

- Know how COVID-19 spreads.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after you have been in a public place and touching any surfaces even at home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Immediately wash your hands for 20 seconds afterward.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Maintain at least a **6-foot distance** between you and others if you have to leave your home to take care of others or to buy food and medicine.

Where can I get tested?

If you are sick, call your doctor’s office. An assessment will be done via telephone or virtual visit depending on whether your doctor’s office is currently open or closed to the public. **Testing for COVID-19 must be ordered through your physician.** If you are not sick enough to be hospitalized,

you might be directed to go through the UPMC Hamot collection center in the 100 block of West 3rd, entrance facing West 3rd, or Allegheny Health Network Health and Wellness Pavilion-WEST ONLY at 4247 West Ridge Road, or MedExpress at 5039 Peach St. If you are very sick, especially if you are having trouble breathing, you should go to a hospital emergency room. Testing conducted at your doctor's office is extremely limited at this time.

What is Erie County government doing?

- Communicating regularly with Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Communicating with City of Erie government, community health partners, businesses and organizations.
- Meeting internally to make sure we are prepared if we would have a suspected and/or confirmed case in Erie County or our region.
- The County Executive is holding regular press briefings with media and community health partners.
- Banning County employees from traveling for anything that is not essential to the functioning of their position.

Who is most at risk?

- People who have traveled to places where the virus is occurring either in the U.S. or overseas
- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- All ages with underlying health conditions, particularly if the underlying medical conditions are not well controlled. This includes:
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Moderate to severe asthma
 - Serious heart conditions
 - Conditions that make a person immunocompromised including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
 - Severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic kidney disease and who are undergoing dialysis
 - Liver disease

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

- **Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. Separation helps prevent the spread of disease.
- **Isolation** separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Do people returning to or moving to Erie County and have traveled for vacation or business or moved from within the U.S. or internationally need to quarantine prior to returning to work or school?

It is strongly recommended that if you are returning to Erie County after vacation or business travel, or just moving into Erie County, that you self-quarantine for 14 days.

Can I travel?

On April 1, 2020, Governor Wolf put into effect a “**Stay-at-Home**” order for all of Pennsylvania except as needed to access, support, or provide life-sustaining business, emergency, or government services. <https://www.governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200401-GOV-Statewide-Stay-at-Home-Order.pdf>

The U.S. Department of State has issued a Global Level 4 Health Advisory: Avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19.

Does the Health Department provide a return-to-work/school form/excuse?

No, Erie County Department of Health does not provide work/school forms/excuses regarding COVID-19. If needed, contact the medical provider who ordered the testing.

Where can businesses and employers get instructions for managing employees?

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- Pennsylvania Department of Health: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Businesses.aspx>

Can businesses tell employees to get COVID-19 testing prior to returning to work?

No, employers cannot tell employees to get COVID-19 testing.

If I have a cough or fever and I have not traveled to a location with confirmed COVID-19, can I go to a doctor?

Yes, if you are sick, please contact your doctor via phone or telemedicine for instructions or advice.

What are the telehealth options?

- [Highmark \(Amwell\)](#)
- [UPMC \(Anywhere Care\)](#)
- 1-877-PAHealth (for those without insurance)

Can the Erie County Health Department test me for COVID-19?

No, Erie County Department of Health cannot test for COVID-19.

What should I do about going to an event?

There is currently a “Stay-at-Home” statewide order from the Governor.

Do family members need to self-quarantine if another family member returns from out of county vacation or business travel?

No. Family members should practice social distancing, disinfecting the household, proper hand sanitizing or handwashing, and covering coughs and sneezes. For more information about social distancing, go to <https://www.health.pa.gov>

If a family member returns from out of county vacation or business travel and becomes ill during self-quarantine, should I self-quarantine?

Yes. You should self-quarantine while the affected family member is being evaluated. If testing returns positive for COVID-19, then an additional 14-day quarantine period should begin for family members in contact with the affected person.

What cleaning supplies will actually kill COVID-19?

For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol and most common EPA-Registered household disinfectants should be effective. For more information, go to <https://cdc.gov/coronavirus> and read “Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations.” You can also review recommendations at <https://epa.gov/coronavirus> and read “Information on Disinfectants.”

If I get a product from China, can I open it?

Yes, per the CDC: “There is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods. Information will be provided on the [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) website](#) as it becomes available” (CDC, 2020).

**Please note: This document will be updated as needed.*