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Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Public Health provides guidance for returning travelers

As an increasing number of countries around the world begin to experience person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 infections, there are questions about what travelers should do when they return to the U.S.

For travelers from China, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still actively screening at airports and notifying local public health departments at their final destination. These individuals are then monitored by public health.

Individuals returning from Italy, Japan, South Korea and Iran are also considered to be at an elevated risk of exposure. Although the CDC has not made any formal monitoring recommendations for these individuals, the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Branch is asking returning travelers from areas with sustained community transmission to monitor themselves for fever and respiratory symptoms upon their return.

- If you are a returning traveler experiencing mild respiratory symptoms that do not usually require medical care such as a mild runny nose, sore throat or cough without fever (temperature less than 100.4 F), please stay home while ill and until symptoms clear.
- If you are a returning traveler experiencing more concerning symptoms and feel you need medical evaluation, please phone your medical provider or the emergency department before going in for care. This allows facilities and providers to take proper precautions to reduce the spread of disease. If you have any questions about this, you can also phone the Public Health Branch at 707-445-6200.

Standard public health recommendations for ill individuals apply regardless of travel history and include staying home when ill, covering your cough, washing hands frequently and cleaning commonly used surfaces in the home often such as keyboards, remotes, phones, doorknobs, handles and counters. Taking these measures inside the home will help to protect family members if you are ill. Having ill family members keep some distance from other household members, such as

staying in their own sleep area as much as possible rather than in common spaces, can also help to decrease spread.

When COVID-19 begins to circulate within our own community, there will no longer be a need for travelers to self-identify as they will be at no higher risk of infection than anyone else in the community. DHHS Public Health, the California Department of Public Health and the CDC are closely watching this rapidly evolving situation and will provide additional guidance as it becomes available.

At some point, when our community is seeing spread of COVID-19, we may implement some social distancing strategies such as cancelling large events, recommending people avoid large gathering places and even working with schools on temporary closures. These strategies can be effective in slowing the number of new cases but also have broad-based community impacts, so these measures will only be taken if they are likely to help limit transmission.

In the meantime, review your family's emergency preparedness plan just as you would for earthquakes or fires or other events that might disrupt normal day-to-day activities. Being prepared will help to decrease the impact of COVID-19 in our community.

For more information about COVID-19, please call Public Health during normal business hours at 707-445-6200, or visit Humboldt Health Alert at humboldt.gov/HumboldtHealthAlert.

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