

March 16, 2020

Texas State Sen. Bryan Hughes is the Chair of the Committees on State Affairs and on Administration and leads this effort to provide accurate information to the public. Additional information is compiled from FSC medical professionals working on the front line to treat and prevent COVID-19. Find additional resources [here](#), including links to all 50 states' primary references on COVID-19.

Basic Problem

COVID-19 can potentially create a “pig through a python” situation where a large percentage of people develop the virus simultaneously. If that happens in a particular region, as it has in some other countries, the health care system for that area could be overwhelmed.

Your personal safety is best served by not being part of the “pig through the python”. Use this sheet to educate yourself on some of the safety precautions that front-line emergency room physicians take to protect their families.

We typically do not recommend anonymous sources, but in this instance, the author is known to and deemed credible by one of our medical professionals. We therefore suggest reading this article: [Newsweek](#): Young and Unafraid.

Note: we disagree with the box following the article in that it implies that masks are effective for members of the general public. As we later report, masks are a poor strategy for anyone other than someone trained to fit and wear a mask.

Political Update

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that for the next 8 weeks, **organizers cancel or postpone in-person events that consist of 50 people or more** throughout the U.S.

The Texas Governor has declared a State of Disaster. That means infected individuals can be subject to court orders requiring compliance with health directives, infected places of business can be quarantined without notice, areas of the state can be placed under quarantine, and individuals can be required to disclose immunization information to public health authorities.

The Governor's Declaration also frees up funding and allows for relaxed rules and regulations as needed to expedite Texas' response to the virus. In particular, the Declaration:

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- Authorizes the use of all available and necessary state government resources to help manage this situation.
- Activates the state emergency management plan and the State Operations Center to enhance the state's planning and response capabilities.
- Gives the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) the ability to reassign & fully utilize appropriate personnel where they are needed most.
- Provides the immediate ability to move resources around the state, including resources obtained through the Strategic National Stockpile.
- Empowers the Office of the Texas Attorney General (OAG) to pursue cases of price-gouging and ensure that offenders are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. See Texas AG Ken Paxton's page on how to spot and report COVID-19 price [gouging](#).

Locally in Texas, Dallas City and County have restricted public gatherings of 500 or more people. Other local governments will almost certainly be considering similar restrictions.

Public schools are also responding to the virus and working closely with the Texas Education Agency. The Superintendent of each Independent School District has authority to close schools in the District, and over 200 have done so. The Governor, the Department of State Health Services, and local health authorities also are empowered to close schools, but this decision has, so far, been left to discretion of each Superintendent. There is a current [list](#) of the Texas public schools that have closed.

The likely future public policy response includes:

- Further restrictions on large gatherings.
- More public school closings.
- Virus testing resources.

If you live in a Texas City, your Mayor and City Council have the responsibility and authority to respond to health concerns in the City. For residents outside of a Texas City, the County Judge and Commissioners' Court fulfill this role.

Each region of Texas also has a local Public Health Entity that coordinates with the Department of State Health Services and is specifically tasked with helping address the virus. [Contact](#) info for local Texas Public Health Entities.

Hot Spots

Washington State, New York State, and Northern California are the primary American “hot spots” for COVID-19. Gunnison, CO, a popular Spring Break destination for Texans, has just been declared a “hot spot” for COVID-19 and has closed its ski resort and schools. Local officials are spreading the word that Gunnison Valley is [closed](#) for business.

As of March 15, 2020, there are confirmed cases in seventeen Texas counties, with the highest concentrations on the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater Houston metropolitan areas. The current [list](#) of Texas cases by County is reported by the Department of State Health Services.

COVID-19 Facts

COVID-19 is not the flu. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by a previously unknown coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Because COVID-19 was discovered in December 2019, much is unknown concerning the disease.

The most common COVID-19 symptoms are fever, tiredness, and dry cough; other symptoms can include aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, and diarrhea. The symptoms start gradually and are usually mild. Some infected people do not develop symptoms and do not feel sick. ~ 1 out of 5 infected people require special treatment to recover and ~ 1 out of 6 infected people become seriously ill and have difficulty breathing.

We believe the disease spreads through small droplets expelled from the nose or mouth when a COVID-19 infected person coughs or exhales. This can lead to another person getting infected if: (1) they touch any objects or surfaces on which these droplets land, and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth; or (2) they breathe in the droplets right after the person coughs or exhales. This is why it is important to stay more than 3 feet away from a COVID-19 infected person and to remove your shoes when you enter your home after walking through a public area.

The infected droplets may remain contagious for several days, depending on the surface. We do not know if, after contracting COVID-19, you are immune from contracting it again.

COVID-19 Protection Strategies

Wash your hands with soap when possible for at least 20 seconds (have little kids sing “Happy Birthday” twice); use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as a second choice. Dry your hands completely afterwards. Germs spread easier on wet surfaces than dry surfaces.

Cough into your elbow or a tissue.

Avoid touching your face.

If you are sick, self-quarantine and call your doctor about getting tested.

Avoid close contact with people showing symptoms.

Practice social distancing. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, kissing, and sharing food or drinks.

Frequently clean public surfaces.

Hospital workers wear masks specifically fitted to their faces. An amateur attempt at fitting a mask may *increase* the wearer’s chances of getting sick because germs enter through the gaps, are trapped inside the mask, and breathed in repeatedly. Masks are also in short supply and the U.S. Attorney General has asked that the general public stop purchasing them, as *these masks will be needed by the heroes who treat infected people.*

Eliminate all non-essential travel, in-person gatherings, meetings, and outings where you will be in close proximity to other people. You could unknowingly be a carrier of the virus and by attending mass gathering, transmitting it to the at-risk population.

Travel only when necessary, and drive instead of using public transportation.

Work from home if possible.

Understand that COVID-19 is more serious and contagious than the flu.

Entering the home. If you have been to a place where you were in close proximity to other people, wash your hands as soon as possible, remove your shoes before entering the house, and shower and change clothes as soon as you are able.

Reach out to people by telephone. Self-isolation can lead to depression and negative mental health outcomes. Speaking by phone with others helps both parties’ mental health.

Stay informed. This is a rapidly evolving situation that changes hourly. Check both your national and local resources to understand the virus' effect on your day to day life and on a global scale.

In addition to the steps above, here is the process emergency room physician Dr. Markus Forsythe developed for his family before entering their home after interacting with the public in the Pacific Northwest:

Enter from one door only (the garage door). Use hand sanitizer before entering the home. All shoes, coats, and bags are left in the garage. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds immediately after entering.

We are continually learning more about how COVID-19 spreads and can be contained. This information is subject to change and we have no responsibility for updating this publication.