

March 17, 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](#),¹ 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.²

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 White House recommends [Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#),³ including that organizers cancel or postpone in-person gatherings that consist of 10 people or more throughout the U.S.; the CDC removed its headline of yesterday recommending a 50-person limit and referred viewers to the White House recommendation. Congress and the White House are working toward emergency legislation to ease the economic burden of the pandemic.

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

¹ <http://fscllp.com/fsc-covid-19-resources/>.

² <https://www.newsweek.com/young-unafraid-coronavirus-pandemic-good-you-now-stop-killing-people-opinion-1491797>.

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/coronavirus-guidelines-america/>.

This publication provides only general information and should not be relied upon as legal or medical advice. This publication may be considered attorney advertising in certain jurisdictions.

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 recent days, Texas continues to take steps that will keep the supply chain of food and necessities moving as well as easing the burdens of daily life during this time, including:

- So far almost 800 Texas public schools have closed, representing all but about 300,000 students. The current list of closings is [here](#).⁴
- As more local public school officials are electing to close schools, the state is suspending STAAR testing, the state academic accountability test. Texas is also relaxing rules so that schools may provide meals for students who would otherwise be receiving lunch and breakfast at schools that are now closed. The state is also ensuring that local public school funding will continue to flow, so long as the school is doing its best to implement home learning with the technology available in its community.
- Texans will have a grace period of sixty days to renew their Driver Licenses that expire after March 13.
- Weight limits and other rules for trucks on Texas highways have been relaxed to expedite the delivery of food, medical supplies, and other consumer goods.
- Temporary licensing for out of state and retired physicians, physicians assistants and nurses has been fast tracked.

Dallas, Houston, Waco and Austin are requiring that restaurants do not serve customers in their dining rooms. Take-out and drive through are generally allowed. Fort Worth is cutting occupancy limits of all restaurants in half, with an absolute cap of 125 including restaurant staff.

Regarding gatherings generally, many Texas cities now have a crowd size restriction of 50 (with exceptions for government buildings, grocery stores, pharmacies, and schools). A few jurisdictions are allowing groups of 200-250. In Austin, the limit is 10 people.

And as of Wednesday, March 18, the Texas Capitol will be closed to the public.

Potential future public policy responses include:

- Further restrictions on gatherings.

⁴<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Texas%20School%20Closings%20as%20of%20March%2017%20at%2012pm.pdf>.

- Further restrictions on restaurants, bars, etc.
- More public school closings.
- Dramatically increased virus testing resources.
- Further easing of regulatory burdens.
- Delayed or reduced taxes and fees.

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 Public Health Entities is [here](#).⁵

Hot Spots

Washington State, New York State, and Northern California are the primary American “hot spots” for COVID-19. A U.S. list of cases by state is [here](#).⁶

As of March 17, 2020, there are 64 confirmed cases in 19 Texas counties, with the highest concentrations in the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater Houston metropolitan areas. We note that the numbers are in flux. Some counties are in the process of updating their counts and the Texas Department of State Health Services tally may not be perfectly current. The list of confirmed Texas cases by County as reported by the Department of State Health Services is [here](#).⁷

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

⁵ <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/>.

⁶ <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/graphics/2020/03/10/us-coronavirus-map-tracking-united-states-outbreak/4945223002/>.

⁷ <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm>.

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 heros 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.