FAQ's

Health

1. What is COVID-19?
   COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This is a new virus that hasn’t caused illness in humans before. Worldwide, COVID-19 has resulted in thousands of human infections, causing illness and in some cases death. As the virus continues to spread, there have been cases reported in over 100 countries (according to WHO), including the United States.

2. What is the risk of COVID-19 to Anne Arundel County right now? What about in the future?
   The World Health Organization has declared the coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic. The State of Maryland is continuing to operate under a state of emergency, and all levels of government are taking a comprehensive approach to keep Marylanders safe. To date, there are 26 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Maryland residents.

   Most cases of COVID-19 have been international travel related. On March 12, Governor Larry Hogan announced the first case of community transmission of COVID-19 in Maryland. The patient, a Prince George's County resident, had no known exposure to coronavirus through travel or an infected individual. Community transmission is how the common cold and flu are spread — meaning people catch a disease from each other while going about their daily lives. The first case of COVID-19 community transmission in Maryland means the state is entering a new phase of working to mitigate and limit the spread of this pandemic.

3. Who is at risk currently?
   Currently, people who are most at risk are those who:
   - Recently traveled to China, Iran, Ireland, South Korea, most of Europe or the UK.
   - Have close, personal contact with those recent travelers
   - Have close, personal contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
   - Care for people with COVID-19
   - Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, are at higher risk.
4. How does COVID-19 spread, what are the symptoms and how do I prevent the spread?

COVID-19 is spread just like colds or flu through:

- coughing and sneezing, which creates respiratory droplets
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it

Symptoms:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- In more severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)

5. If someone has COVID-19, what will happen to them?

Most people recover from this infection. Close to 80 percent will have mild or moderate symptoms. Some people may be advised to recover at home and isolate themselves from others. These individuals should call their physician or clinic if their symptoms get worse. There is also no specific medicine currently to cure COVID-19 because it is a new disease. However, people who have COVID-19 should get medical care to lessen the severity of symptoms.

Some COVID-19 infections can lead to serious illness, and in some cases death. If someone has a more serious illness from COVID-19, they may be admitted to the hospital. Older people and those with pre-existing medical problems have a greater risk for serious illness. Examples of pre-existing medical problems are cancer, diabetes, heart disease, COPD or other conditions impacting the immune system’s ability to fight germs.

6. What can I do to protect myself and others?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. So, it is important to take everyday preventive steps that are always recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses like colds, flu and COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using standard cleaning practices.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
• If you are sick, stay home except to get medical care. Inform your supervisor of any illness.
• Practice social distancing. Avoid crowds. In a group setting, it is best to provide at least 6 feet of space between individuals.

7. What should I do if I think I am sick with COVID-19?
If you have recently traveled internationally or were in contact with someone with COVID-19, and you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical care right away. Follow these steps:
• Call your doctor or emergency room before you go.
• Tell them about your recent travel and close contacts (such as people in your household.)
• Wear a mask if one is available. An ear loop mask or simple surgical mask would be appropriate.

8. I don’t have symptoms, but was recently in contact with someone who was tested positive.
At this time, if you are not having any symptoms (asymptomatic), you will not be tested, due to limited resources. Please stay home and self-quarantine for 14 days.

9. What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?
• Mildly symptomatic patients (like fever or mild cough) who are otherwise healthy can self-quarantine, monitoring temperature and symptoms and check in with your medical provider as needed.
• Individuals who have severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek care immediately. Always call ahead to your medical provider or emergency department.
• Older patients and individuals who have underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their physician early in the course of even mild illness. In most situations, those patients will need to be evaluated in an emergency department. Always call ahead to your medical provider or emergency department.

10. Should the general public wear face masks?
No. Face masks are not recommended for the general public. Masks can be useful in some settings, such as in a clinic waiting room, to prevent someone who already has a respiratory illness from spreading it to others.
11. How can people be tested for COVID-19?
There is no COVID-19 home test kit on the market for sale. People that suspect they have COVID-19 should contact their health care provider, who will determine if the patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and will decide to refer the patient for lab testing.

12. How can I be more prepared for COVID-19?
- Have an adequate supply of over-the-counter drugs and other health supplies on hand, which could include: pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Have a thermometer, tissues and hand sanitizer in case you become ill and must stay at home to recover.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Have a two-week supply of water and food in your home.

13. Should I cancel my family trip?
Currently the CDC warns that travelers avoid all nonessential trips to China, Iran, Ireland, South Korea, most of Europe and the UK. View Travel List The CDC also advises people who are elderly and those with chronic health conditions to avoid all nonessential travel.

14. Is there anything else I should know?
Do not stigmatize people of any ethnicity. People who have not recently traveled to China or other affected regions, and have not had close contact with a person who is ill with COVID-19, are at no greater risk of this disease than you. Viruses do not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial backgrounds.

Stay informed and only get information from trusted, official sources. Be especially wary of myths, rumors, misinformation and scams circulating online and elsewhere. Health information spread on social media is frequently inaccurate.