Community Update

We are committed to making sure that you are receiving timely information as our community deals with the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has confirmed that a patient admitted at Memorial Medical Center has tested positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by a member of the coronavirus family. The patient is critically ill and currently in Intensive Care. Our critical care team and other members of the patient’s care team are coordinating with local and state health officials in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Illinois Department of Public Health on isolation and on protective equipment for the healthcare providers. A second patient has been identified that was tested at an outpatient facility. Details on the second patient are pending notification of family.

A press conference will be held at 5:30 p.m. today at the Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation, 228 W. Miller St., to answer further questions from media. Representatives from Memorial Health System, Sangamon County Public Health Department, Springfield Clinic, HSHS St. John’s Hospital and Southern Illinois University Medicine will participate.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in 2019. People who get sick with COVID-19 develop mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Illness can begin 2 to 14 days after exposure.

What are the symptoms?

COVID-19 can cause mild symptoms, including a cough and a fever. In some cases, it can lead to pneumonia or breathing difficulties. Rarely, the disease can be fatal. Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions can be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

How are people infected with COVID-19?

COVID-19 can spread from person to person and is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. As with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they have the most symptoms.
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What if I believe I have been exposed to COVID-19?

At this time, the biggest risk of exposure is for people who have recently traveled to a part of the world where COVID-19 is widespread. If you traveled to those areas and are experiencing symptoms, do not go immediately to a hospital or clinic. Instead, call your physician for instructions. This will limit the number of people who are exposed to your illness.

What can I do to prevent COVID-19?

It's important to remember that we are also in the midst of a very severe flu season. The same prevention methods for the flu also apply to COVID-19. They include:

- Use proper handwashing technique. Wash for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before eating; after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; or after going to the bathroom. If your hands are not visibly soiled, you could also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of it immediately.
- Avoid touching your face, particularly your nose, mouth and eyes.
- Stay home when you are sick, and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Experts do not recommend wearing a face mask to protect yourself from respiratory disease. However, if you have symptoms, a mask can help prevent spreading your illness to others. Healthcare workers caring directly for patients with respiratory illness also use these masks.

For more information, contact Gail O’Neill at Sangamon County Department of Public Health at 217-535-3100 ext. 3701.