



March 2, 2020

Dear Contra Costa County colleagues and community,

We are increasingly concerned about the spread of COVID-19 across the U.S, and in the coming days, we expect to see additional cases of COVID-19 here in Contra Costa County. Our focus is shifting from actions to contain COVID-19 to preparing for a sustained response, including consideration of future measures to limit and slow the spread of the disease in our community.

The COVID-19 outbreak has the potential to turn into a pandemic, which means a simultaneous, worldwide occurrence of an infectious disease. Locally, we may face difficulty obtaining some goods and services, public events may be cancelled, and our ability to travel might be restricted. Although this is a difficult message to share, it is important to recognize how difficult the times ahead may be. **Now is the time for individuals and families, neighborhoods, community organizations, businesses, schools and all sectors to take steps to be prepared.**

Here are some ideas to help get prepared and prevent spread of disease now:

- Businesses and community organizations should review their continuity of operations plans and consider how they will operate if a significant number of employees are unable to work.
- Businesses and schools should review their sick leave policies and actively encourage employees and students/staff to stay home if they are sick. Do not require a doctor's note on return to work/school as healthcare facilities may be severely impacted.
- Medical facilities and health providers should review their surge plans in case they are called upon to handle more patients than usual at one time.
- Stock up on the essentials in case of shortages and if you need to stay home.
- Make sure your earthquake kit is up to date and ready to go – it is full of vital supplies you can use for any emergency.
- If you can, obtain a two-month supply for your medications or consider using a mail order pharmacy.
- Think about how to care for loved ones at home if they or you get sick, including how to prevent other family members from becoming infected.
- Wash your hands! Frequent handwashing is easy, under your control and has no significant downsides.
- Don't touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home from school or work when you are sick.



- Cough into the crook of your arm or into a tissue.
- Use a barrier, such as a paper towel or tissue, to touch commonly touched surfaces, such as bathroom door handles and elevator buttons.
- Bump elbows or bow instead of shaking hands.
- Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Get vaccinated against the flu if you haven't already.

In the near future we may need to take action to slow the spread of COVID-19 which will help to limit the number of people who become ill, protect our health care systems from being overwhelmed and give time to develop a vaccine and treatments. This is accomplished by instituting practices that increase social distancing which means staying at least 6 feet away from other people so that the virus cannot be transmitted. We are not asking for implementation of the actions below at this time, and will carefully consider the public health benefits and the community impact, but actions may include:

- Canceling events and avoiding gatherings of large groups of people
- Working from home or teleworking
- Temporarily closing schools and childcare facilities

This situation is changing rapidly, and we know many people in the community are feeling fear and anxiety. At this uncertain time, we believe the best thing Contra Costa residents can do to reduce their own risk is to stay informed, and take steps to be prepared to prevent the spread of disease now and in the future.

Contra Costa Health Services will keep you updated with information and health advice as the situation changes on our website cchealth.org/coronavirus and social media.



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