

Friday, February 14, 2020 – 2:52 pm

Based on information from the Virginia Dept. of Health and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), here's a brief summary of information available as of Feb 13th

- The situation continues to be rapidly evolving. VDH has setup a web page specifically for coronavirus – www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus. This site has up-to-date information about the situation in Virginia as well as direct links to CDC information.
- The novel coronavirus got an official name this week – COVID-19.
- As of 2/13/20 the World Health Organization (WHO) is reporting 46,997 confirmed cases world-wide. 25 countries are now reporting confirmed cases, with the majority still found in China. China is now reporting clinically diagnosed cases (i.e., including patients who appear to be presenting symptoms consistent with COVID-19, but have not been tested positive) in addition to laboratory-confirmed cases – it is believed that this change has contributed significantly to the dramatic increase in the number of cases being reported in China this week. The WHO only reports laboratory-confirmed cases so you may see higher numbers of reported cases elsewhere.
- In the US, there are currently 15 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with the known cases being found in 7 states (MA IL, WI, WA, CA , AZ & TX). It is expected that additional cases will be identified in the coming days. 2 of the 15 cases in the US are confirmed person-to-person transmissions of the virus. In both cases, the transfer was between spouses. While person-to-person spread of COVID-19 has been seen among close contacts of returned travelers from Wuhan, this virus is not currently spreading in the community in the US. The CDC risk assessment to the US general public continues to be low.
- In VA, 6 individuals have been tested for COVID-19. All 6 tested negative for the virus.
- In VA, 45 travelers (e.g. they have recently returned from China) are currently under Public Health Monitoring. At this time, Public Health deems 12 to be at low risk and 33 to be at moderate risk for COVID-19. It is important to note that these individuals are not currently suspected of having COVID-19, they are just being monitored closer than the general public because they have travelled from China in the last 14 days.
- As mentioned before, It's important to note that we are still in flu season – flu is currently considered widespread in VA. As of the Feb 13th VDH Weekly Influenza report, 6,386 case of flu had been reported in VA this flu season and VDH had received 773 pneumonia and flu related death reports. The VDH recommends everyone take 3 actions to prevent further spread of influenza:
 - Get vaccinated every year – if you haven't already gotten your flu shot this year, it is not too late.
 - **Practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers regularly. Those that develop a cough or a sneeze should do so into a tissue or the inside of their elbow, washing their hands afterwards.**
 - Take antivirals as prescribed by your healthcare provider if you do become sick.
- While they are still learning how COVID-19 is transmitted, it is likely that it will also be determined to be transmitted through coughing, sneezing or close personal contact just like the flu. Again, good hand hygiene and cough etiquette is likely a good way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Moving forward, my plan is to provide a weekly update unless circumstances warrant a more frequent update. The VDH webpage www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus is the best source for up-to-date information.