

Novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the UP Community as of 13 February 2020

On December 31, 2019, an outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus or novel coronavirus disease, previously called 2019-nCoV, was first reported from Wuhan, China, and has since spread across the globe. Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some of these viruses cause illnesses that include both the common cold and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

With over 20,000 cases reported across 24 countries, including the Philippines, it is important to know what we must do to prevent an infection. For us in the UP community, the University has a set of protocols if we or someone we know contract what the World Health Organization has named the COVID-19 acute respiratory disease.

Positive for exposure

If you have traveled to China, Macau, Hong Kong or other areas with confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection, or if you have had close contact (within one meter) with a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection, you should stay at home and monitor yourself for symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath, for 14 days from the date of arrival or exposure. While current data show that people who have symptoms contribute most to the spread of the disease, it may also be possible that people infected with COVID-19 may be infectious before they even show any symptoms.

If you have come into close contact with a confirmed case, or you have been exposed to potential infection during your travels, please seek consultation with the University Health Service on campus or to the nearest health facility and undergo a health assessment before resuming your daily routine.

At this point, you will be designated as **Person Under Monitoring (PUM)**, which includes self-monitoring. Here are some home quarantine instructions for PUMs:

- Stay at home except when getting medical care.
- Separate yourself from the other people in your home.
- Avoid sharing household items.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water and sanitize with alcohol.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with tissue.
- Wear a face mask with the colored side facing outward.
- Monitor your symptoms.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor.

Positive for symptoms

If you have been exposed to COVID-19 through your travels or through close contact with a confirmed case, and you are showing respiratory symptoms, here is what you should do:

1. Seek consultation with your University Health Service on campus or to the nearest health facility. Once there, you will be asked to fill out a form that will include questions about your travel history and/or if you have come into contact with a confirmed case. Make sure you wear your face mask properly and call ahead.
2. You will be brought to a holding area where the physician on duty will more closely investigate the timing of your symptoms. At this point, you will be designated as **Patient Under Investigation (PUI)**.
3. The physician will inform the City Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (CESU) or the Municipal Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (MESU), and will continue to coordinate with the CESU/MESU in monitoring your condition, which will include admitting you to specialized hospitals with the capacity to treat the disease.

Preventive measures

When it comes to good health, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. **For the members of the UP community who have not recently traveled to China, Macau, Hong Kong or come into close contact with a confirmed case**, follow these infectious respiratory disease-prevention rules from the Department of Health and World Health Organization:

1. **OBSERVE PROPER HAND HYGIENE.** Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (or two rounds of “Happy Birthday”), and, if available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. **REMEMBER THAT YOUR FACE IS SACRED.** Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Your hands may have touched contaminated surfaces, and you can transfer germs from the surface to yourself.
3. **RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE.** Avoid crowded places and maintain at least a one-meter or three-foot distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.
4. **PRACTICE GOOD COUGH ETIQUETTE.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and properly and immediately dispose of the tissue. Wash your hands properly afterward. (Refer to Item No. 1.) You may be asked to wear a face mask to protect others.
5. **WEAR THE FACE MASK PROPERLY.** Wear the face mask with the colored side facing outward, fully covering the nose, mouth, and chin. Never touch the mask with your hands. Remove the mask by holding only the strings. Properly dispose of the mask. Wear a face mask only when necessary, such as if you are immunocompromised or have a cough and cold.

6. **AVOID EATING RAW OR IMPROPERLY COOKED ANIMAL PRODUCTS**, as the COVID-19 is also animal-transmitted.
7. **WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER AFTER CONTACT WITH PETS.** Although there is no evidence yet that pets can be infected with COVID-19, this will help prevent the spread of other germs such as E. coli and Salmonella. Also, wash your hands with soap and water after visiting an animal market or wet market, and avoid unprotected contact with wild or farm animals.
8. **WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING THINGS SUCH AS DOOR KNOBS AND TABLE TOPS.** Although coronaviruses do not survive long on objects such as letters and packages, they have been detected on places like door knobs, table tops or other surfaces.
9. **KEEP YOUR GADGETS AND PERSONAL ITEMS CLEAN.** Disinfect your mobile phones, tablets, laptops, bags, eyeglasses, etc. regularly.
10. **GET YOUR INFORMATION ONLY FROM THE PROPER AUTHORITIES** to prevent the spread of fake news and disinformation. Proper health authorities include your University Health Service on campus, the Department of Health and its city and regional offices, and the WHO.
11. **BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM** by eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep and exercise, and drinking plenty of water. A strong immune system will be better able to fight off the COVID-19, as well as other diseases.

Know who to ask

To prevent the spread of misinformation and undue alarm, it is important that we get our information only from the proper authorities.

For questions and concerns, please contact the Public Health Unit of the University Health Service on campus or in the health facility near you.

For UP Diliman, call (02) 8981-8500 local 2709, 2701, or visit the UP Diliman Public Health Unit's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/UHSPublicHealth/>.

For UP Manila, call (02) 8554 8400 local 2076 and 2077; or (02) 8523 5350

For UP Baguio, call (074) 442 0363.

For UP Los Baños and the UP Open University, call (049) 536 6238.

For UP Cebu, call (032) 232 2642 local 305.

For UP Mindanao, call (082) 293 0863 local 9051.

For UP Visayas' Miag-ao campus, call (033) 315 8301; for its Iloilo campus, call (033) 337 8594.

For daily updates and information about the COVID-19, please visit the DOH website (<https://www.doh.gov.ph/2019-nCov/>), and the WHO website (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>).

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Images

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