COVID-19 FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation is rapidly evolving, therefore Emergency Responders are encouraged to check the Public Health COVID-19 webpage and the CDC website for current information.

1. What are the typical symptoms of COVID-19? Fever and mild to severe lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, chest pain). Disease onset is currently believed to be between 2 to 14 days after exposure.

2. How is the virus transmitted? Transmission can occur through inhalation of droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and through droplet contact with the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, and eye. Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in the US has been seen among close household contacts of symptomatic individuals.

3. What should I do if I see a patient with respiratory symptoms? If the patient has a fever, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, or cough:
   - Place a surgical mask on the patient AND
   - Ask about travel to an affected county within the past 14 days or close contact with someone under investigation for COVID-19.
   - If patient’s history shows risk of COVID-19 take the precautions described below.
   - Notify the receiving hospital as soon as possible.

4. How do I protect myself?
   - Adhere to Standard, Contact, and Airborne Precautions, including the use Eye Protection (e.g., N-95 respirator, gown, gloves, and goggles or a face shield).
   - Perform hand hygiene before and after all patient contact, contact with all potentially infectious materials, and before putting on and removing PPE, including gloves. Wash with soap and water for minimum of 20 seconds, or if no hand wash station is available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

5. Should healthcare workers wear surgical masks all the time for their own protection, even when they are not caring for COVID-19 patients? Surgical masks are most effective when used to help block respiratory secretions produced by the wearer from contaminating other persons and surfaces (source control). Surgical masks have not been recommended by the CDC for use by healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 or by the general community to prevent transmission. Furthermore, surgical masks are not designed to be worn continuously and should be discarded after use with each patient as they can become contaminated. In some cases, wearing masks inappropriately may actually increase the risk of illness to the patient and the healthcare worker.

Adapted from Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health
6. What airway protection should EMS providers use if intubating patients with possible COVID-19? Though patients with COVID-19 in the US have not required intubation, it is a possibility. The CDC recommends that procedures more likely to produce respiratory aerosols like intubation and bronchoscopy should be performed by staff wearing an N100 respirator or a powered air purifying respirator (PAPR).

7. What are the environmental cleaning recommendations? Coronaviruses are inactivated by EPA-registered disinfectants if used correctly.

- Clean and disinfect using EPA-registered hospital disinfectants as recommended by their instructions for use (IFUs), paying attention to the wet contact time required.
- Wear PPE required for COVID-19 when disinfecting the vehicles or surfaces.
- Properly dispose of PPE according to protocol.
- Follow waste management policy per protocol.

8. Who can I contact if I have any questions regarding COVID-19?

Contact Riverside County Public Health.

Business Hours: (951)358-5000
After hours: (951)782-2974

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