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Novel Coronavirus Update

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- On January 27 the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) reported that test results on three possible cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus came back negative. A specimen from a fourth possible case, from Washtenaw County, was sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for testing.

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can infect people and animals. They are a common cause of mild respiratory illness, or "the common cold", in people. Occasionally, coronaviruses from people and animals mix together, creating a new strain. These new strains usually cause worse illness in people.

An example of one of these new strains is the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Cases started in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and as of January 27, 2020, number over 2,800 in 15 countries, with 81 deaths. This is a fatality rate of approximately 3%. There have been 5 cases in the United States but no spread of the illness from these cases.

Other examples new strains of coronavirus include the severe acute respiratory disease coronavirus (SARS-CoV). In 2002-2003, it caused 8,437 cases and 813 deaths, a fatality rate of approximately 10%. In 2012, another novel coronavirus named Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) was identified as a cause of severe illness. It caused over 2,400 cases and had a fatality rate of around 35%.

Coronaviruses, including 2019-nCoV, are spread by droplets created by coughing or sneezing. This is the same way influenza is spread. While 2019-nCoV is a serious public health situation, only those in direct contact with someone ill are at risk. It is recommended that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Hubei Province, China. It is also recommended that people traveling to other parts of China avoid contact with people who are sick and practice good hand hygiene.

If you have been in China within the last 2 weeks and develop symptoms of 2019-nCoV, which include fever, cough, or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider. Symptoms should appear within 2 to 14 days after being exposed.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to this virus. But everyday actions can help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

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- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect touched objects and surfaces.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes

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