

Update: March 2, 2020

To the Linfield Community,

As many have read or heard on news reports, COVID-19, which originated in China has now spread to many countries, including the United States. Federal authorities today announced 60 people in the United States had been infected with the virus, mainly from travel abroad. At the time the infection has been identified in one household near Portland, however, federal and state health authorities warn the virus is likely to spread and encourage people to prepare for the illness' arrival in their community. Linfield has experience with novel viral illness and many of the staff and faculty here now were here in 2009 when H1N1 influenza affected our campus. Drawing on that experience as well as using the guidance from local, state and federal health authorities, Linfield is currently planning methods to respond to an outbreak. Such plans for students may include medical care, housing considerations, including quarantine and isolation, as well as alternatives to the traditional classroom experience.

The Human Resource Department as well as the Dean of Faculty and Provost will be involved in the planning process so the entire Linfield community's needs are addressed.

As with any illness, each of us carries our own unique set of risks and concerns, please confer with your health care provider regarding any specific questions about your health.

Below is some helpful information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus Webpage that explains what is currently known about COVID-19 and ways to protect yourself from illness. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage you to check the webpage often for the most up to date information.

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). The virus is transmitted by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but

this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. Severely ill people may develop pneumonia. The very young, very old and those with compromised immune systems are more severely affected by the illness.

How can I help protect myself?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health care workers and for people taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

If you are ill with a cough, please call your health care provider for instructions prior to visiting a clinic, hospital or other medical facility. Specific recommendations may be made in anticipation of your visit, such as wearing a mask or checking in at a different location.