News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Wyoming's First Coronavirus Disease 2019 Case Reported

Lab testing at the Wyoming Public Health Laboratory has identified the first known case of a state resident with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), according to the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH).

Dr. Alexia Harrist, state health officer and state epidemiologist with WDH, said the patient is an adult female from Sheridan County with some recent domestic travel history.

WDH is following up to learn more details about the person's exposure risk and to identify and communicate with anyone who may have been in close contact with the patient. Known contacts will be monitored for symptoms and tested if needed. As is currently standard, the test result is considered to be a "presumptive positive" and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will conduct further testing for confirmation.

Harrist noted the current risk of transmission in Wyoming remains low for most residents. "We expected to identify a case in Wyoming at some point because the reach of the disease is clearly growing. Travelers to certain affected locations and close contacts of ill people are still overall at the highest risk of becoming ill," she said.

"Our state has been planning for this situation for weeks and we will continue our coordinated efforts to address this threat," Governor Mark Gordon said. "I pledge to work closely with our state agencies, federal partners and local officials to ensure we are implementing all the necessary steps to protect public health."

Harrist said symptoms reported with this disease are familiar: fever, cough and shortness of breath. There are many different coronaviruses, some of which cause the common cold in people and others that circulate among animals.

Experts believe COVID-19 spreads mostly between people who are in close contact and through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most ill with obvious symptoms. A person may also get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

Recommended steps that can help avoid the spread of COVID-19 or similar illness include:

Avoid close contact with sick people.
While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible.
Stay home if sick.
Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.
Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60 percent alcohol.

"Travel recommendations and restrictions are also important," Harrist said. The CDC currently recommends no nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea and Italy and no travel on cruise ships.

The CDC also says older adults and travelers with underlying health issues should consider avoiding situations with increased risk for transmission because they are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness. Examples include avoiding non-essential travel such as long plane trips and avoiding crowded places.

For more information about coronavirus disease 2019 and Wyoming, visit:
https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/.

For more details about the disease from the CDC, visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html.