Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is happening?
There has been an outbreak of a new illness called novel coronavirus, now named COVID-19. While the illness started in China, the situation is quickly changing. There have been cases of COVID-19 in many countries, including in the U.S. related to travel and person-to-person spread. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updates U.S. case counts regularly on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays. See the current U.S. case count of COVID-19.

What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?
COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus that causes COVID-19 is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and usually cause mild illness, like the common cold.

What is the County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division doing?
The County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division has been working closely with the CDC as well as our state, regional and local partners to manage testing and monitoring of persons who may have been exposed to COVID-19. County Public Health is planning for a sustained response to reduce the impact of the disease, which includes working with partners and advising all sectors of the community to take immediate steps to be prepared.

Am I at risk of getting COVID-19 in the United States?
Your individual risk of getting COVID-19 is based on potential exposure to other cases. This is a rapidly evolving situation and the risk assessment may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) website.

How does COVID-19 spread?
Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread person-to-person through respiratory droplets (e.g., uncovered
coughs). That is why the CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. To note, it may be possible that a person can get COVID-9 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.

**What are the symptoms?**
Symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included: fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Some people may have pneumonia or more serious illness.

**How do I protect myself and my family from getting COVID-19?**
1. Get your flu shot to protect against flu, which is now widespread and has symptoms like the ones for COVID-19,
2. Wash your hands with soap and water, rub for at least 20 seconds.
3. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, sleeve or arm. **Do not use your hand.**
4. Stay home if you are sick with a fever, cough, shortness of breath and are feeling tired.
5. Stay away from large groups of people if possible.

**Do I need to wear a mask?**
Healthy individuals do not need a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses. A surgical facemask can be worn by those who are coughing or sneezing to protect others from getting sick. Please be aware that surgical masks and N-95s are already in short supply and should be prioritized for use in health care settings.

**Should we avoid going to public events?**
Please remember that flu and other respiratory viruses are very common right now, and large group gatherings are places where viruses can spread. Remember, if you are not feeling well or are experiencing cold, flu or other symptoms, stay home to avoid spreading germs.

**I'm sick. How do I know if it is coronavirus or something else, like the flu?**
Call your doctor if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. Tell them if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Your doctor will work with the local public health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you don't have a doctor, call 211 to find the closest safety net clinic.

**Should we cancel travel plans?**
At this time, the CDC has issued Level 2 and 3 travel advisories, recommending to avoid all nonessential travel to destinations with level 3 travel notices. For level 2 travel notices, the CDC recommends that older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel to those destinations. Please check the CDC website for current advisories to other countries: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
How should I prepare for a community spread COVID-19 in Santa Cruz County?

- Store a two-week supply of food, water, and household goods. Plan accordingly;
- Make sure family and organization emergency preparedness kits are up to date and ready to go. Stocking extra emergency supplies is a good idea;
- Prepare for shortages in medications. Try to obtain two to three months’ supply of critical prescriptions;
- Create plans to care for loved ones at home if they or their caregivers become ill. Do so in a manner that limits spread within the family;
- Use a barrier, such as a paper towel or tissue, to touch common surfaces such as bathroom door handles or elevator buttons.

I’m feeling stressed and overwhelmed, who can I talk to?

An anonymous crisis line is available 24 hours, 7 days a week including holidays at 1-800-704-0900 (Mental Health Services) and/or SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline 24 hours at 1-800-985-5990 or text TALKWITHUS to 66746 (Press 2 for Spanish).