**What is Coronavirus?**Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory virus first detected in Wuhan City, China in December 2019. While there are several strains of seasonal coronavirus that are present in our region that cause the common cold, this novel strain spread from an animal to humans and humans currently lack immunity to it. Like the flu, COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets when someone coughs or sneezes or when someone comes into contact with respiratory secretions and then touches their mouth, eyes, or nose. People usually get sick within 14 days of being in close contact with a person actively infected with COVID-19.

While there is limited person-to-person transmission currently in the U.S., the risk of contracting coronavirus in our region is low. Of far more concern is this year’s flu outbreak. That said, the practice for preventing the spread of infectious illnesses including coronavirus and other viruses is to wash your hands often with soap and water. If those aren’t available, use a 60 percent alcohol gel in the meantime and wash your hands as soon as possible. Also, avoid touching your eyes, face, nose or mouth, and avoid contact with people who appear to be ill.

If you are feeling ill and have a fever, stay home and rest. Cover your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands often. Drink plenty of fluids and take fever-reducing medications as your healthcare provider directs. Avoid coming into contact with those who aren’t sick. The best way to stop the spread of illness is to avoid others for about 24 hours after your fever breaks and you’re feeling better.

If you feel you need medical attention, call your primary care or pediatric care provider for direction about what to do. If you don’t have a primary care or pediatric care provider, call the AtlantiCare Access Center at 1-888-569-1000.

If you are told to visit urgent care or an emergency department, please call ahead to let the facility know why and when you are coming. When you arrive, check in with the front desk and request a mask, to avoid spreading the illness—again, likely not coronavirus—to others in the waiting room.

**How does 2019-nCov spread?**
This strain spreads similarly to the flu: through people coughing or sneezing, touching or shaking hands, or touching uncleaned surfaces after someone with the virus has touched it. In some rare cases, it can be spread through contact with the feces (poop) of a person with 2019-nCoV.

**What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?**Since we are learning more about this strain each day and gaining a better understanding of how people react to it. But so far, symptoms appear to mimic the flu. They include fever, cough, and fatigue. Some people might develop breathing problems. Most people can remain at home and rest until they feel better and have no fever. Those with underlying health conditions could require hospitalization.

**Should I be worrying about contracting 2019-nCoV?**
If you have not visited a region within the past 14 days with widespread COVID-19 spread, or if you have not come into contact with anyone who has a confirmed case COVID-19, the answer is no. If neither of these scenarios applies to you, it is far more likely that you are suffering from the flu or another respiratory illness. If one of these scenarios does apply, contact your primary care physician immediately.

**To learn more about coronavirus:**

* [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/)
* [New Jersey Department of Health](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/)
* [New Jersey Hospital Association](http://www.njha.com/healthy-communities/promoting-and-protecting-health/public-health-issues/coronavirus/)
* [Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)](https://www.njpies.org/)
* NJ PIES Public Call Center (NJPIES) – 1-800-222-1222