CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)

NOTE: This lesson was written on March 23rd, 2020. Lesson will be updated as new information is confirmed.

INTRODUCTION

Since December 2019, COVID-19, commonly referred to as the Coronavirus has spread to all the states. Due to the fast spreading of this virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) has categorized COVID-19 as a pandemic. While there have been deaths associated with the virus, the majority of people do recover. This lesson will go over how the virus is spread and how you can minimize your chances of spreading or catching the disease.

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses. This family of viruses can cause illnesses that range from the common cold to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

The strain of coronavirus that is causing the current outbreak is being labeled as COVID-19.

SYMPTOMS AND COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

Depending on the person, symptoms may not appear for two to fourteen days. Symptoms can include fevers, cough, and shortness of breath. Fevers can range from low grade (above 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit but lower than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) to more severe fevers (103 degrees Fahrenheit or higher).

Some recent studies suggest that some portion of the population will be asymptomatic (show no symptoms) of the disease. This portion of the population is known in the scientific community as carriers.

Symptoms can range from very mild to severe. How symptoms affect you can depend on your age and health. Healthy and young individuals appear to have more mild symptoms, while elderly and those individuals with underlying health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease tend to be at a higher risk of experiencing more severe forms of this disease.

In patients with severe cases of this strain of coronavirus, complications such as pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, etc., could occur. In some cases, patients, may die from complications.

HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

COVID-19 can be transmitted in the following ways:

- Respiratory droplets released into the air by coughing or sneezing.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before hands have been washed or sanitized.
- Fecal contamination (this is rare).

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

As of now, there is no vaccine or treatment for this mutated form of the coronavirus. Patients can only receive supportive treatment for the symptoms and complications of the disease. As of now, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people self-quarantine for fourteen days should they appear symptomatic or have been in contact with people who have shown symptoms or have tested positive for the virus.

MINIMIZING YOUR CHANCES OF CATCHING AND SPREADING COVID-19

To help minimize the chances of catching and spreading COVID-19, people should do the following:

- Do NOT travel if you don't have to.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick or if your area has mandated a shelter-in place order.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap is unavailable, the CDC recommends using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Use alternatives to handshakes. Avoid contact whenever possible.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with tissues then throw tissues into the trash after each use.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Maintain at least 6 feet between yourself and others whenever possible.

Some states are putting out orders that require people not working in essential businesses to stay at home and are asking those business still in operation to practice certain precautions, such as curbside pickup, deliveries, frequent handwashing, and implementing social distancing practices. You are encouraged to follow all enacted orders and policies for your area. Please note that orders and policies are constantly changing.

It is important for everyone to remember to not let panic cloud your mind. You will be able to take the appropriate steps to minimize your chances of catching and spreading the disease if you are thinking clearly and calmly.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU APPEAR SYMPTOMATIC

If you suspect that you have COVID-19, appear symptomatic, or have been in contact with someone who has either tested positive or may be showing symptoms, the CDC recommends that you do the following:

- Self-quarantine;
- Avoid sharing household items;
- Monitor symptoms;
- Cover coughs and sneezes; and
- Wear a face mask.

If you are experiencing symptoms, please contact your doctor or local Centers for Disease Control to find out about virus testing in your area.

CONCLUSION

While this current pandemic can be scary, it is important for you to remain calm and use good hygiene practices to help minimize your chances of catching COVID-19. It is recommended that you do not travel if it can be avoided. If you are experiencing symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive or showed signs, you should call and speak with your doctor about testing options. The CDC recommends self-quarantine if you are showing signs, symptoms, or have tested positive for the virus.