



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

February 14, 2020

**MEDICAL ALERT: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE-19 IDENTIFIED IN TOURIST  
AFTER RETURN TO JAPAN**

Dear Healthcare Provider:

The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) has been notified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that they were alerted by Japan counterparts regarding a person who was recently in Hawaii and who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19, formerly known as 2019-nCoV) after returning to Japan. The asymptomatic traveler was on Maui from January 28–February 3, 2020. However, while in Honolulu (between February 3–7, 2020), the traveler developed mild cold-like symptoms *without fever*. After returning to Japan, the person developed a fever which within days progressed to pneumonia and was subsequently confirmed as COVID-19. The incubation period for COVID-19 is estimated to range from 2–14 days. Therefore, providers should be aware persons who may have been infected through exposure to this traveler would present with symptoms any time between February 5–21, 2020.

At this time, we are not aware of any close, prolonged contacts this traveler may have had with others while here, although investigation is ongoing. Casual, brief contact should pose low to no risk. Note the criteria to guide evaluation of persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19<sup>1</sup> include clinical symptoms AND a history of travel to mainland China OR close contact with a laboratory confirmed case. Much is still unknown about transmission; however, we ask you to consider COVID-19 in patients (even those without history of travel to mainland China) who have fever AND signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath), **that cannot be explained by another diagnosis**. Please note influenza cases are currently increasing in Hawaii, and signs and symptoms of COVID-19 overlap with those associated with other respiratory tract infections. Testing for other common respiratory pathogens should be performed as clinically indicated.

If you suspect a patient may have SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19, formerly 2019-nCoV) infection:

- Place a facemask on the patient and isolate in a private room
- Follow the CDC's guidance on Infection Prevention and Control recommendations in healthcare settings<sup>2</sup>
- Inform your facility's infection control personnel
- **Inform the Hawaii Department of Health immediately (see numbers below)**
- **Collect two (2) nasopharyngeal (NP) specimens**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html>

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- Send one (1) specimen for respiratory pathogen panel testing at your clinical laboratory
- Send one (1) specimen to SLD to be tested for SARS-CoV-2

It is critical all healthcare providers practice and emphasize the importance to patients and the public of basic respiratory disease prevention and infection control practices including:

- Get your flu shot.
- 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.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 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.

**This is a rapidly evolving situation**, subject to change as more information/data becomes available. To ensure you are accessing the latest information, please visit HDOH’s clinicians’ page at: <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/for-healthcare-providers/news-updates/> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

***Providers should notify infection control personnel and HDOH’s Disease Outbreak Control Division immediately if any patients have severe respiratory symptoms and are suspected to have COVID-19.***

If you have any questions or need to report a PUI, please contact HDOH at one of the numbers below.

- Oahu (Disease Reporting Line)..... (808) 586-4586
- Maui District Health Office..... (808) 984-8213
- Kauai District Health Office..... (808) 241-3563
- Big Island District Health Office (Hilo)..... (808) 933-0912
- Big Island District Health Office (Kona).....(808) 322-4877
- After hours on Oahu.....(808) 600-3625
- After hours on neighbor islands.....(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate your ongoing assistance in protecting our community.

Sincerely,



Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP  
State Epidemiologist  
Hawaii Department of Health

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