

This message is from Ravin Davidoff, MBBCh, SVP and Chief Medical Officer

Dear Colleagues,

We wanted to provide an update on the novel coronavirus – now being called COVID-19 – and highlight recent international travel restrictions, which are changing rapidly. Currently, the risk of contracting COVID-19 in the United States remains low. However, a multi-disciplinary team has been meeting regularly to discuss preparedness efforts and ensure BMC is prepared should we get a case or suspected case of COVID-19.

Symptoms, Treatment and Testing

- Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu – fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- BMC is following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention isolation precaution guidelines. There are currently no vaccines available to protect against human coronavirus infection, and treatment is supportive care.
- There are many other types of coronavirus. The test done at BMC **does not test** for the new coronavirus. BMC only tests for the other, routine coronaviruses, which cause mild to moderate upper respiratory tract illnesses. The test for the new virus, COVID-19, can only be done by the CDC.

Travel

- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) posted a travel advisory](#) that recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to China and South Korea. The CDC has also issued guidance on traveling to other heavily-impacted countries.
- The Working Well Clinic is following CDC guidelines to determine whether employees and providers who have traveled from high-risk areas can safely return to work. For questions regarding travel or planned travel by you or your staff to or from high-risk areas, please call or email the Working Well Clinic at 617-638-8400 or workingwellclinic@bmc.org.

Conservation of N95 Respirator Masks

- There is a worldwide demand for N95 respirators, which has put them in short supply. Our regular shipments of these respirators have been suspended by our suppliers, making it difficult to sustain our inventory. N95 respirators **should only be used** by staff who are caring for patients on airborne precautions and for the administration of certain chemotherapy agents.

Preventing the Spread of Viruses

There are simple everyday preventive actions outlined by the CDC that can help prevent the spread of viruses like the flu and COVID-19:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

BMC will continue to closely monitor the situation and work in partnership with local and national public health officials. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the CDC's [website](#). Visit the Hub's [Emergency Management](#) section for the latest guidelines and BMC-specific information.