

Texas Response to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Presentation to the House Committee on Public Health

John Hellerstedt, MD, Texas Department of State Health Services

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Characteristics of COVID-19



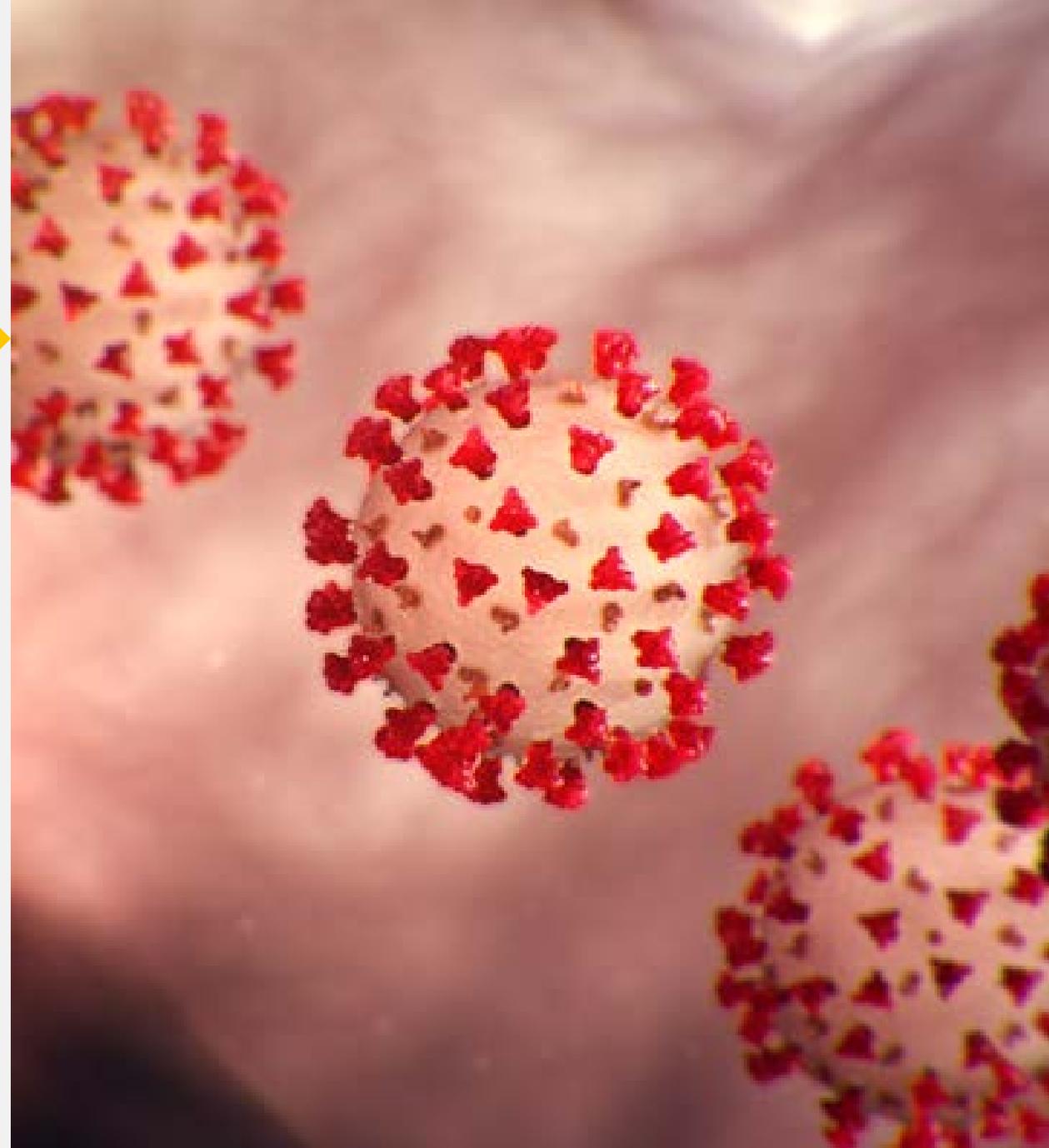
Background: Novel Viruses



- Novel viruses are viruses that have not been seen before in a population.
 - This means that nobody has an immunity against the virus.
 - The lack of immunity means more individuals can get sick.
 - As people gain immunity or a vaccine is developed, fewer will get sick.
 - COVID-19 virus was pre-existing, but in animal reservoirs. The virus jumped from animals to humans, making it a novel virus for humans.
 - Due to its novelty, many unknowns remain about COVID-19.
 - Existing research about coronaviruses provides a knowledge base for COVID-19. More will be learned about COVID-19 virus specifically, including:
 - The severity of the disease
 - How the virus spreads
 - How easily the virus spreads
 - How long the virus incubates before symptoms appear
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COVID-19 Symptoms

- Patients with COVID-19 virus have respiratory illness that ranges from mild to severe.
- Symptoms can include:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Symptoms of COVID-19 virus may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.
- Symptoms most commonly appear about a week after exposure.



Mode of Transmission

- Mainly from person-to-person, through close contact (within about 6 feet).
 - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Less often spread by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- People are most contagious when they are showing the most symptoms.
 - Some reports of spread from people without symptoms, but this is not the main way COVID-19 spreads.



COVID-19 Prevention

- There is not yet a vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19 virus.
 - Research institutions and federal entities are working towards these long term solutions.
- However, every individual can take action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus in Texas.
- These are the same precautions that are effective against the flu or common cold.
 - Practicing personal hygiene habits like through handwashing
 - Keeping home when sick
 - Avoiding close contact with others who are sick
 - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- Additionally, avoiding travel to areas of the world with sustained COVID-19 virus transmission.

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



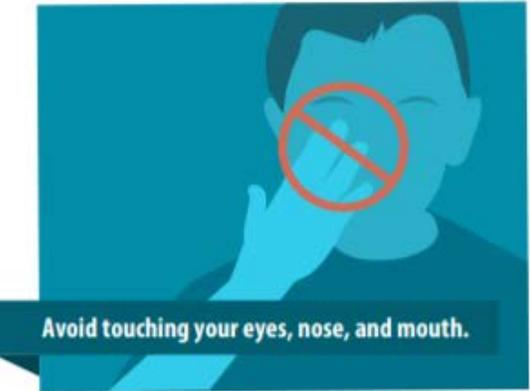
Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



International COVID-19 Situation



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Outbreak Origin

Hubei Province, December 2019

- In late 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases emerged in Wuhan, China.
- Originally, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread.
- Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread.
- Since that time, person-to-person spread has occurred outside Hubei and in countries outside China, including in the United States.
- Some international destinations now have apparent community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19 virus.
 - Community spread means that nobody is sure how or where they became infected.



Travel Guidance and Restrictions

Destination	CDC Risk Assessment	Travel Recommendations
China	Widespread sustained transmission and restrictions on entry to the U.S.	Level 3: Avoid all nonessential travel. Entry of foreign nationals has been suspended.
Iran	Widespread sustained transmission and restrictions on entry to the U.S.	Level 3: Avoid all nonessential travel. Entry of foreign nationals has been suspended.
South Korea	Widespread sustained transmission	Level 3: Avoid all nonessential travel.
Italy	Widespread sustained transmission	Level 3: Avoid all nonessential travel.
Japan	Sustained community transmission	Level 2: Older adults or those with chronic medical conditions should consider postponing travel.
Hong Kong	Limited community transmission	Level 1: Travelers should practice usual precautions.
Cruise Ships (in/around Asia)	-	All travelers should reconsider cruise ship voyages into or within Asia at this time.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Current National Situation



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Federal Agencies



Federal agencies involved in the novel coronavirus response include:

- White House
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
- Administration for Children & Families
- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Federal Activities (cont.)

- **Information for travelers.**
 - CDC continuously evaluates the international situation and maintains information for travelers and clinicians to inform travel plans and health care screenings.
- **Airport screening.**
 - Flights from China and Iran are being funneled into 11 U.S. airports so that incoming travelers are screened for fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
 - Exit screening in Italy and South Korea is being performed before U.S. residents/citizens can return.
 - Any travelers with signs of illness receive a more comprehensive public health assessment to determine whether monitoring and isolation is warranted.
- **Persons under investigation (PUIs).**
 - CDC provides guidance for classifying Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) for appropriate public health precautions, such as testing, isolation, or public health monitoring.
 - CDC also consults with state and local health departments on individual cases.

Federal Activities (cont.)



- **Laboratory testing.**
 - CDC laboratories are testing to assist with diagnosis of COVID-19.
 - CDC has also distributed testing kits to public health laboratories to expand capacity throughout the country.
 - A new FDA process allows private laboratories in the country to be validated to perform the test.
- **Repatriation flights from areas with substantial COVID-19 transmission.**
 - The U.S. government has repatriated families from Hubei Province and cruise ships.
 - After arriving in the U.S., the repatriated travelers are placed under federal quarantine orders.
 - Repatriates stay at military bases or at hospitals for medical care and isolation until their 14-day quarantine period is over.
- **Guidance for individuals, facilities, schools, medical and public health professionals.**
 - The CDC is continuously developing and updating guidance documents for a variety of audiences that could be impacted by COVID-2019.
 - Guidance is found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>.

Current Texas Situation



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Texas COVID-19 Case Counts



- Texas has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 virus that involve person-to-person spread in the community.
 - Texas has received repatriates who tested positive for COVID-19.
 - Texas has also detected COVID-19 in multiple individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 virus through international or interstate travel.
- Texas continues to monitor individuals with travel to outbreak countries or possible exposure to COVID-19 virus.
 - Texas county and city local health departments have monitored hundreds of travelers returning from outbreak areas.
- Texas has tested dozens of individuals in the community and many tests are pending.

Texas Actions: Repatriation



- The Department of Defense selected Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio as a site to receive Americans being returned to the U.S. by the federal government.
- Repatriates must complete a 14-day federal quarantine without symptoms in order to return home. 14 days is considered the incubation period for COVID-19.
- To relieve pressure from San Antonio community hospitals, DSHS opened a wing of the Texas Center for Infectious Disease to care for repatriates who developed symptoms or had a positive test, but who were not sick enough to be hospitalized.

Texas Actions: Surveillance



- Travelers
 - Texas local health departments evaluate and monitor individuals returning from outbreak areas based on CDC information.
 - Texas public health has evaluated over 1,000 individual notifications since late January, and public health has worked and completed over half of these.
- Community
 - Health care professionals screen their patients every day for illnesses like COVID-19.
 - DSHS supports this frontline surveillance through up-to-date Texas guidance and daily calls to answer questions and provide the latest details on Texas COVID response.
 - DSHS also provides consultation on individual situations to ensure appropriate public health precautions to protect the community.

Texas Actions: Laboratory Capacity



- Texas laboratories are standing up local testing, which will allow faster diagnosis and public health response if there are positive cases.
 - DSHS laboratory capacity in Austin stood up on March 5, 2020.
 - DSHS is also working to stand up laboratory capacity at its South Texas Laboratory in Harlingen.
 - Texas public health and private laboratories throughout the state are also working to open up testing.
 - Capacity within the state should expand quickly throughout March.
 - For positive cases, CDC will have to perform confirmatory testing at its laboratories in Georgia.
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Texas Actions: Communication

dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus

COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

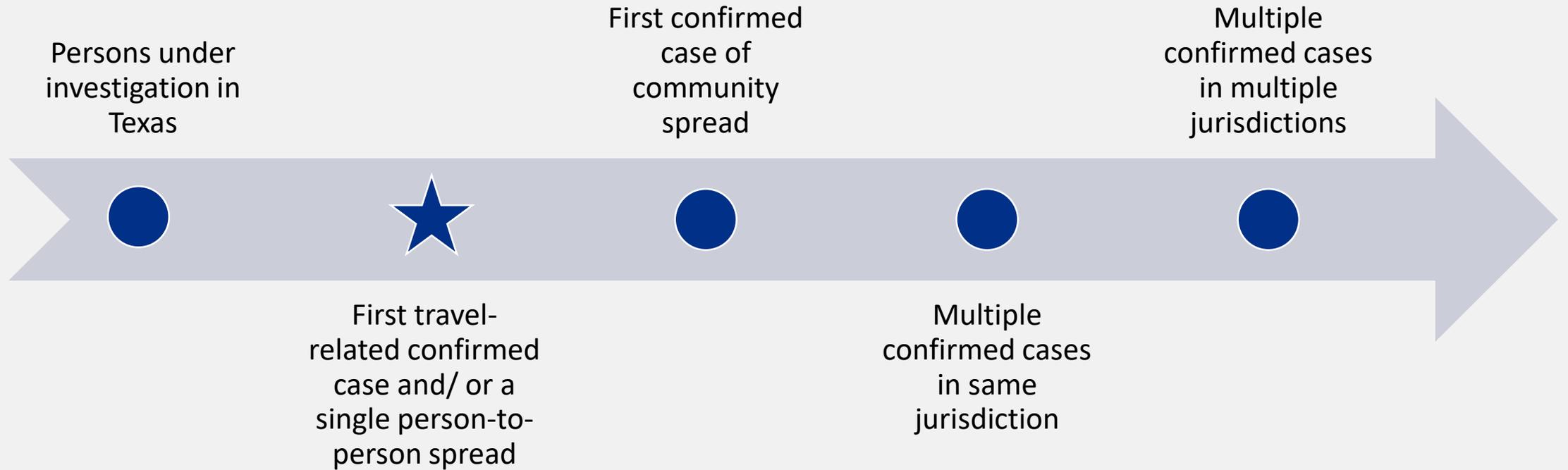


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- Creation and maintenance of the DSHS Coronavirus webpage: <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>.
- Written materials for local communities to harness as they respond to COVID-19.
- Daily calls with public health, providers, and other stakeholders.
- Regular calls with local officials statewide, including emergency management, schools, higher education, and local leaders.
- Targeted briefings for groups like hospitals and providers.
- Consultation with state agencies on messaging specific to their constituencies and staff situations.
- Texas-specific guidance as a complement to CDC guidance for a variety of professions and settings.
- A communications toolkit for businesses, state agencies, and organizations.

Texas Actions: Preparation



Texas Preparation (Cont.)



Community Mitigation Strategies Available for Individuals and Communities

Use of strategies should be informed by science and the facts of individual and community situations.

- Personal health and hygiene habits
- Household cleaning and disinfection
- Social distancing
- Reduction of in-person gatherings
- Preparation for school closures or changed work schedules

Texas Preparation (Cont.)



Community Mitigation Strategies Available for Local and State Governments

Use of strategies should be informed by science and the facts of individual and community situations.

- Recommendations for social distancing
- Public health monitoring and testing for individuals suspected of exposure to the virus
- Isolation and quarantine
- Mass gathering recommendations
- Reduced use of mass transit
- Workplace recommendations for telecommuting and sick leave

Applicable Emergency Preparedness Plans

TDEM State Plans

State of Texas Emergency Plan

- Basic Plan
- Emergency Management (Emergency Support Function 5)
- Public Health and Medical Services Annex (ESF 8)
- Biological Hazards Annex
- High Consequence Infectious Disease Annex
- Repatriation Annex

DSHS Public Health Plans

Respiratory
Viruses Having
Pandemic
Potential Plan
for Public Health

H1N1 After
Action Report

State Agency Planning



TDEM and DSHS are leading an effort to update state plans and develop operational guidelines specific to COVID.

- Bi-weekly meetings with all relevant state agencies at the State Operations Center.
- State agencies are discussing current state emergency planning documents and how the plans will be implemented during the state's COVID-19 response.
- This planning will include different scenarios, ranging from the current situation of containment to widespread transmission (pandemic).
- The goal is that state agencies have a clear understanding of the tools at their disposal to protect Texans, so that the state can act swiftly and rationally as the situation unfolds in Texas.

Expectations for the Future



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- Today, Texas has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 of person-to-person spread within Texas.
 - However, this could occur any day.
- This is a serious situation for the state and the nation, and will be a long term event.
- Every individual, organization, and community in Texas can take steps to delay the spread and minimize the impact of COVID-19.
 - The impact to Texas will be more severe if we don't act.
- There are things everyone can do to protect themselves, especially members of the public.
- All can help by practicing crucial prevention steps and by learning and sharing accurate coronavirus information.

Thank you!