



O R E G O N

COVID-19: In-Home Care Workers

March 13, 2020

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has announced the second case of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) detected in Marion County. Both patients had no previous contact with a confirmed case and it is suspected of being community acquired. In keeping with confidentiality guidelines, OHA is not releasing additional information.

Marion County Health and Human Services has an important role in responding to any reports of COVID-19 in our community. Currently, public health is investigating the patient's contacts and ensuring that our community remains protected.

As the coronavirus spreads in Oregon, it's becoming more apparent that older adults and people with underlying health conditions are most at risk.

To protect yourself and your clients here are recommendations from the Oregon Health Authority.

- Good hand hygiene is essential for infection control. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of the hands and rubbing them together until dry. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes using a flexed elbow, not hands.
- In-home personal care workers who are ill should stay home until they are free of fever and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicines or cough suppressants).
- If you are experiencing symptoms of illness such as fever, coughing and shortness of breath and wish to be tested, your healthcare provider will help decide whether you should be tested for COVID-19. Testing for this illness is coordinated between healthcare providers and public health authorities.
- Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures should be used. Clean all "high-touch" surfaces, such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables, every day. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions.
- Employers of in-home personal care workers should provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for their employees. If employers cannot obtain PPE through usual means, they should contact their local (county) public health authority for

assistance. Continued communication with case managers of individuals is highly encouraged.

- Masks appear to be useful when they are worn by people who are ill to limit the spread of virus when the ill person coughs or sneezes.
 - Place mask carefully to cover mouth and nose securely to minimize gaps between the face and the mask.
 - While in use, avoid touching the mask.
- Do not reuse personal protective equipment (PPE). Dispose of masks and any other PPE immediately after use. Immediately after touching or removing PPE and after contact with respiratory secretions, clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Limit time together in an enclosed space.
- Make sure that shared spaces in the home have good airflow (e.g., an air conditioner or an opened window, weather permitting). Consider interacting outdoors if appropriate.
- In-home personal care workers should avoid face-to-face interactions with the client by maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet to the best of their ability.
- Make sure that the client practices good hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- If close contact with an ill person cannot be avoided, follow standard infection prevention practices as recommended by your employer.
- Assist clients to gather resources they would need to stay at home for up to 2 weeks if they become sick or need to minimize contact with others (such as medication refills).
- If a client is ill:
 - In-home personal care workers in the DHS system should call the client's case manager to find alternative ways to support them.
 - Other in-home personal care workers should postpone non-essential in-home visits with any person that has a cough or fever until symptoms resolve. If possible, increase services provided by phone or online, instead of in person.
 - Phone services will not be possible for those providing assistance in the activities of daily living.

DHS has resources and information for Personal Support Workers and Home Care Workers on their website at: <https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-DISABILITIES/HCC/PSW-HCW/Pages/Health-Safety.aspx>

OHA has comprehensive information on their website including fact sheets and information about the number of persons under monitoring or investigation. You may also [sign-up for regular email updates](#) to keep informed of the latest developments in Oregon.

Please visit the Marion County [Health and Human Services website](#) for additional information and links to both OHA and the CDC. For general information about the novel coronavirus, please call 2-1-1.