



GENESEE AND ORLEANS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS



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Dear Fellow County Employees:

I know you are concerned about novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the risk this poses to you and your family. As your County Health Director, I want to assure you that the risk from this virus to the majority of New Yorkers still remains low. You likely heard in the media, that New York identified its first two cases of COVID-19 on March 1st and as of this writing there continues to be more positive cases daily throughout New York State, none of which are currently in our counties. Despite this, the risk for contracting the virus is still low in New York State. People most at risk are those who have traveled internationally in the past 14 days or have been in close contact with an international traveler in the same time frame.

Locally, our Health Departments are working across the counties with community partners to ensure plans are in place to minimize the spread of the virus if we start to see local cases.

It's important to note that cold and flu viruses are much more prevalent in New York right now. You are far more likely to contract one of these viruses than the novel coronavirus. You already know the steps to take to stop the spread of all of these viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, especially before you eat.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- And if you feel sick, stay home. If you had a fever, stay home until you are fever-free for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medication such as acetaminophen.
- Clean / Sanitize shared space often.

Many people are asking what they can do to prepare if the virus becomes prevalent in NY.

One thing to do is to update your home preparedness kit. You should have a thermometer, decongestants, anti-inflammatory drugs and acetaminophen for fevers on hand.

The Health Department has fielded numerous calls from individuals inquiring about the use of face masks. CDC does **not** recommend the use of face masks or N95 respirators among the general public. We need to preserve the use of masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers and individuals who may be ill.

Another thing to do is to get your information from reliable sources.

I know that medical disinformation and hateful, hurtful rumors are circulating on the internet. Our workforce can access accurate, reliable and up-to-date information on our web sites and social media platforms. For Genesee County: https://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/health/coronavirus_2019/index.php, for Orleans County: <http://orleansny.com/departments/health/public-health/emerging-infectious-diseases/coronavirus> and for the New York State Department of Health: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>. For local social media follow GOHealthNY on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You can also find reliable information and updates about the virus on the website and social media platforms of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/COVID19.

In Genesee, Orleans and throughout New York State, we stick together when we face a challenge and work together. We are well prepared and will work through this situation and will continue to help educate and protect our workforce and residents.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Pettit, MSL
Public Health Director