



Coronavirus - Fact vs Fiction

There are many fears and concerns about the recent threat of Coronavirus as it begins to spread across the globe. Castleview hospital, Moab Regional Hospital, and local EMS are currently putting in processes that will help to properly address this virus and care for those with complications of the disease, if it comes to our community. You may recall that there was a virulent strain of influenza in the United States a few years ago called H1N1. That was also a more virulent (or infectious) strain than the usual influenza strains. It spread across the United States, but did not have much impact in the Carbon/Emery area. Viruses change strains often and that is why every year the "flu shot" for influenza is a bit different than the year before. In similar fashion, this new or novel virus is a more virulent strain of a group of viruses called Coronavirus. This specific strain is called COVID-19 which the CO stands for Corona and VI for Virus and 19 for 2019 - the year it was identified as a new strain of Coronavirus. It began in China and will spread throughout the world just as influenza does every year.

The most common symptoms of Coronavirus are cough, fever (defined as a temperature over 100.4 degrees), and sometimes shortness of breath. These symptoms are very similar to influenza and other respiratory viruses. There are many viruses in our world that can cause illness. The majority of respiratory diseases are caused by viruses. Antibiotics will never kill a virus and are only likely to cause more problems when given for a virus. As such, do not expect to get an antibiotic from your doctor as there is no cure for coronavirus at this time. Vaccines help to decrease your chance of getting a virus, but there has been no vaccine developed for COVID-19, as of yet. Laboratories are working on getting a vaccine for it.

Currently if people have risk factors for contracting the disease, there is a limited ability to test for it. The only people that are currently allowed to get tested are those with travel history or direct exposure to those that have been in an area known to have the disease. In the near future, more tests will be available, but need to be mass produced. The reason to test now is mostly to track the disease. Once the disease becomes prevalent in an area, there really will be no reason to test for it anymore, unless it is a patient with complications that is admitted to a hospital to help rule out other potential diseases. If the disease spreads and becomes prevalent in our community, testing for the coronavirus is not going to do anything to help you get better or change the way you would be treated. So there is no need to go to your doctor or the hospital at that point unless you have complications of the virus.

The best way to prevent getting the illness is to wash your hands, do not touch your face and stay away from those that are sick. Currently it is believed that the virus is transmitted by droplets from body secretions such as cough and runny nose. Droplets from cough can travel about 6 feet typically. Wearing a typical surgical mask to prevent getting the illness has not been shown to offer much protection from getting the illness, but putting a mask on someone who is already sick does help prevent the spread of respiratory droplets. (<https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/3hvuCM8BW8UZQvxVCw3KAs?domain=cdc.gov>)

It is most likely only a matter of time until Coronavirus arrives in our community, since it is highly contagious. Hopefully, like the H1N1 scare a few years ago, it will not. But if it does come, most people will get better on their own at home. As with any other viral respiratory illness, the best treatment is tylenol, motrin, fluids and rest. Your doctor will not have anything to give you that will cure it and you do not need to see your doctor unless you develop complications. Stay at home so that you do not spread it to others.

Complications are uncommon, but are more likely to occur in the elderly or those with lung disease like COPD and for some people with kidney or liver disease. Complications that you or your family should go see your doctor for would be difficulty breathing, feeling very short of breath, extreme weakness or decrease alertness (not just tired). Once again, fever is an expected part of the disease and unless the fever is 105 or higher, combined with other complications as mentioned, or the patient is an infant, fever is not a reason to go see your doctor. Babies, especially less than 3 months of age should always be seen within 24 hours or sooner with any fever related illness.

In summary, if coronavirus does come to our community, there is no need for panic. Let's work together to keep the spread to a minimum by following appropriate guidelines for prevention and if you happen to get the illness, stay home, unless you have complications. If complications occur, local EMS, Castleview Hospital and Moab Regional Hospital will be ready to help those that need that level of care.

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