What should we know about the 2019 novel coronavirus first found in China?
The national and international situation with the novel coronavirus is rapidly evolving, with the number of cases and deaths changing daily. Public Health officials around the world are working around the clock to understand this new respiratory virus so they can contain it and keep more people from getting infected.

How high is the possibility of people in Idaho getting sick with this virus?
The general risk here in Idaho is fairly low at this point, but public health officials want people to be aware so they can take appropriate precautions. We’re asking you to follow steps you are probably already taking for flu – stay home if you’re sick, avoid sick people, and cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue (not your hands). Wash your hands frequently, especially after you have been in the public and touched door handles, stair railings, money, grocery carts, elevator buttons, and other items that lots of other people may also have touched. Also, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China.

Does the CDC recommend the use of facemask in the community to prevent 2019-nCoV?
A: No. CDC does not currently recommend the use of face masks among the general public. While limited person-to-person spread among close contacts has been detected, this virus is not currently spreading in the community in the United States.

What are the symptoms?
Sick people have reported mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. If you develop these symptoms within 14 days of traveling from Hubei (hoo buy) Province in China, you should call a healthcare provider and mention the symptoms and that you have just returned from that area of China. The provider will work with the local public health district and the Department of Health and Welfare to determine if you should be tested for the coronavirus.

If you think you’ve been exposed, should you go to a clinic or doctor’s office?
If you or someone you know has been in one of the affected areas, believe you may have been exposed to someone who was sick and develop symptoms, call your medical provider to determine next steps. Don't just head to the clinic or doctor’s office because you risk infecting more people in those settings.

How is the virus spreading?
This new virus probably came from an animal, but it now seems to be spreading from person-to-person, most likely in droplets from when a sick person coughs or sneezes.

What is Idaho doing to prepare for a coronavirus case?
Idaho Public Health officials are monitoring the national and international situations very closely. We are working with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other states, and we are also in regular communication with the local public health districts and healthcare providers around the state to make sure they know that to look for and are prepared to respond if someone is sick or has been exposed.
Let’s get back to some basics: What is a novel coronavirus?
Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in people AND animals. Sometimes the viruses infecting people and animals only affect one or the other, and sometimes the viruses affect both groups. A novel coronavirus is one that has not been seen before.

How many people in the United States have tested positive for the virus?
The first infection in the United States was reported on Jan. 21, and there have been several others since, including people who have been tested, but don’t have laboratory confirmation of having been infected. Public health officials are performing contact investigations and monitoring close contacts of people who are confirmed to have been infected. Since diagnostic testing for the virus can only be done at the CDC right now, people should check the CDC’s website for the latest information on cases.

Since officials believe this may have started with a sick animal, are people’s pets at risk?
The CDC recommends that sick people should not handle their pets or other animals. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with this coronavirus, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, people infected with the coronavirus should avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if they must be around animals or care for a pet.

Resources:


Eastern Idaho Public Health: www.EIPH.Idaho.gov

Source of Information:
Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Public Information Office