

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) FAQs

The rapidly spreading COVID-19, or coronavirus, has raised concerns across the country as well as on campus. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control states: “The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is very high, to the United States and globally.” The following FAQs address what SIU is doing to be prepared. This information will be updated as new information is available.

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ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

What is the coronavirus?

The coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus that was first identified after an outbreak of respiratory illnesses in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. The virus has now spread internationally and has been reported in the United States.

How does it spread?

[The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) indicates that the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are within close contact (about 6 feet) or through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat

How can I stay up-to-date on the spread of the virus?

We recommend that you follow reliable sources of information, such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [World Health Organization](#), both of which are constantly updating their websites as the situation evolves.

RISK AND PREVENTION

Am I at risk?

According to the CDC, “the complete clinical picture of COVID-19 is unknown.” Most people who get the virus have mild cases and fully recover. However, some people are at risk for more severe illness, and some have died. According to the CDC, risk factors for severe illness are not yet clear, although older patients and those with chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness.

Following is the CDC’s current risk assessment:

- For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low.
- People in communities where ongoing community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated though still relatively low risk of exposure.
- Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Close contacts of persons with COVID-19 also are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Travelers returning from affected [international locations](#) where community spread is occurring also are at elevated risk of exposure.

What can I do to prevent myself from getting sick from any respiratory virus?

Please see the [CDC recommendations](#).

- Avoid others who are sick if possible
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer multiple times a day
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Have any students, faculty or staff been diagnosed with the coronavirus to date?

We are not aware of any impact to current students, faculty or staff.

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

Faculty and staff, as well as students, should contact the SIU Medicine employee health pager at 217-492-2446 with any employee health or patient questions. See additional information below.

Follow the [CDC’s guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others](#).

- If you are a resident in a community where person-to-person spread of COVID-19 has been detected and you develop COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider about your symptoms.
- If you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and develop symptoms of COVID-19, call employee health about your symptoms and your exposure.
- People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 should isolate themselves at home during their illness.

PROGRAMS AND TRAVEL

How has the coronavirus affected SIU business travel?

The university has restricted all business travel to countries designated as [CDC level 2](#) or above or [State Department level 4](#). Countries currently at CDC level 2 or above include China, Iran, South Korea, Italy and Japan. Because this is a rapidly changing situation, please be sure to check the CDC and State Department sites linked for the latest information. Anyone (students, faculty or staff) returning from countries under CDC travel advisories of level 2 or 3 who choose to return to work will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days.

SIU RESPONSE

What is the medical school doing to minimize the risk of the coronavirus on campus?

The medical school is closely monitoring the situation, including recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, the State of Illinois and local health agencies – spanning the SIU Medicine clinical areas. The Risk and Safety team at SIU Medicine is triaging every patient visiting our clinics and is continually updating coronavirus protocols for clinical teams. Clinical protocols are continually being released from the Chief Medical Officer's office.

What if I have questions?

Visit [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for answers to general questions

Faculty and staff, as well as students, should contact the SIU Medicine employee health pager at 217-492-2446 with any employee health or patient questions.

SIU Medicine-related questions: Please fill out the "[Ask Jerry](#)" form and an appropriate staff member will follow up with you.

What is the university doing to prepare for a potential outbreak of the coronavirus on campus or in the region?

The chancellor has activated the university's "all-hazards" team, established to plan for and address threats to the health and safety of the campus. This cross-functional team will plan for multiple

scenarios should the virus reach central or southern Illinois, including how classes will be handled, related personnel policies and more. The team includes representatives from student health, counseling, housing, academic affairs, student affairs, university communications, procurement, DPS, plant and service operations, environmental health and safety and other areas.

How is the university communicating with faculty, staff and students about the virus?

The university is has sent three messages to the campus community.

- [Letter from the SIU Student Health Service's Chief of Staff, Dr. Paul Bennett](#)
- [Letter from the Chancellor of SIU](#)
- [Letter updating campus, introducing this website](#)

We will continue to reach out and to update you as important new information is available.