



Clallam County Department of Health and Human Services

Mailing Address: 223 East 4th Street, Suite #14 • Port Angeles, WA 98362-3000
Physical Address: 111 East 3rd Street, Suite #1A • Port Angeles, WA 98362
360-417-2274 • FAX: 360-452-4492

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 31, 2020

Contact: Allison Berry Unthank, MD MPH
Clallam County Health Officer
Phone: (360) 460-1188
Email: aunthank@co.clallam.wa.us

2019 Novel Coronavirus:

A new virus called 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019n-CoV) has been identified and is now spreading widely in China. While the situation in China is quite serious and public health professionals are monitoring the situation closely, the risk to the general public in the United States remains very low.

There are currently 6 known cases of the virus in the United States, with 1 in Washington State. The Washington State case is isolated in Snohomish County and any contacts of that person are being closely monitored by the state department of health. To date, there is no known person-to-person transmission of coronavirus in the Western United States. There are no known or suspected cases in Clallam County.

Clallam County Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry Unthank wants the community to know that “this is a serious virus, but so far, it is not a serious threat here. Your local, state and federal public health officials are working hard to keep it that way.”

Novel coronavirus causes symptoms of cough, shortness of breath, and fever, which can look a lot like other viruses. The important difference is that we are only seeing cases of coronavirus in people who have recently traveled from Hubei Province, China or who are close contacts (like family members) of those known to be infected.

While we are still learning a lot about this particular virus, we know that coronaviruses generally are much less contagious than some other viruses we worry about like measles. They require prolonged contact with an infected person in order to be transmitted.

“As it stands, the population in Clallam County is much more likely to be affected by influenza than by coronavirus,” explains Dr. Unthank. The same measures that protect you from influenza can protect you from coronavirus, namely: washing your hands, covering coughs and staying home if you are sick.