News

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Commissioner

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New Jersey Department of Health Opens 2019 Novel Coronavirus Call Center for Public

Collaborates with New Jersey Poison Center to Educate Community

The New Jersey Department of Health today announced the opening of a hotline (1-800-222-1222 or 1-800-962-1253 if using out-of-state phone line) for the public to ask questions about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus.

“Although the risk to the public remains low, we understand that residents have questions about this new virus,” Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli said. “This hotline provides factual information to alleviate fear and dispel rumors.”

The hotline is being operated by the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES), also known as the New Jersey Poison Center, which has run other call centers for the Health Department. NJPIES is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. The hotline can accommodate callers in multiple languages. **“**As a 24-hour hotline staffed continuously with trained

healthcare professionals, the New Jersey Poison Center is standing by to answer questions about this emerging infection. The call is always free, and we can communicate in any language to the public as well as healthcare professionals," said Dr. Diane Calello, Executive and Medical Director of NJPIES.

The hotline is part of a comprehensive approach by the state and medical and public health partners to respond to novel coronavirus (nCoV) by ensuring the public health and health care system preparedness.

The Department has a nCoV webpage that includes CDC updates, travel advisories and guidance sent to health care providers, local health departments, infection preventionists and other health partners.

On Friday, Commissioner Persichilli sent a letter to hospital CEOs detailing specific guidance to healthcare professionals on how to evaluate reports of patients with possible nCoV illness, such as taking a careful travel and exposure history to determine if they meet specific CDC testing criteria. At this time, only the CDC laboratories in Atlanta have the capabilities to test for nCoV, though it is expected that state public health laboratories will be able to test soon.

The Department has also been in contact with Newark Liberty International Airport's Division of Global Migration and Quarantine and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in advance of airport screening.

"The Department reminds individuals with recent travel to Wuhan, China or close contact with someone who has and are experiencing symptoms, to call their health care provider in advance before arriving to the office so they can make accommodations in advance," Commissioner Persichilli said.

Patients with confirmed nCoV infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of nCoV may appear in as few as two days or as long as two weeks after exposure.

New Jersey continues to work closely with the CDC and local health partners to monitor the situation and will provide updates accordingly.

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For more information, visit our homepage at nj.gov/health

Follow the NJ Poison Control Center on Twitter @NJPoisonCenter and Facebook @NJPIES. Visit our homepage at njpies.org

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