



Public Health Brief

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Myth Busting

The following are items available from FEMA. I have edited the document with local and updated information and added a few more "myth busters"!

<https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus-rumor-control>

✓ **Myth:** A recent death reported in China was due to a new hantavirus that can spread from person to person like COVID-19.

Fact: Hantavirus is not new – according to the CDC, it was first observed in the 1950s in Asia during the Korean War, and in this country in 1993 in the Four Corners area. It is spread primarily to humans through contact with the waste products of infected rodents. Transmission from one human to another may occur but is extremely rare. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus> for more information. (The Eastern Sierra is home to most of the hantavirus cases in California each year, so please adhere to the advice in the link. Since hantavirus presents with a clinical picture very similar to seasonal influenza and coronavirus, it may be very difficult for your healthcare provider to tell the difference prior to testing.)

✓ **Myth:** There is a national lockdown and the entire country will be quarantined for two weeks.

Fact: There is no national lockdown. As with all information online or shared via social media, it is important to verify the source of the information. You can find the latest information as well as links to additional resources at www.coronavirus.gov. (The government's ability to restrict or prevent travel is limited by the US Constitution. In the case of a pandemic, the least restrictive measures must be



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taken, including the measures you are now familiar with, such as quarantine of those exposed, isolation of those who are sick, and social distancing for all.)

✓ **Myth: FEMA has deployed military assets.**

Fact: No, FEMA does not have military assets. Like all emergencies, response is most successful when it is locally executed, state managed and federally supported. Each state's governor is responsible for response activities in their state, to include establishing curfews, deploying the National Guard if needed and any other restrictions or safety measures they deem necessary for the health and welfare of their citizens. (Governor Newsom has called out the California National Guard to assist with food distribution efforts where needed.)

✓ **Myth: I need to stockpile as many groceries and supplies as I can.**

Fact: Please only buy what your family needs for a week. It is important to remember that many families may be unable to buy a supply of food and water for weeks in advance. Consumer demand has recently been exceptionally high – especially for grocery, household cleaning, and some healthcare products. Freight flows are not disrupted, but stores need time to restock. (Focus on the necessities – you probably already have enough toilet paper for a long time! Ensure you have enough of your essential prescription medications. Your tap water should continue to be safe and adequate.)

✓ **Myth: I heard that the government is sending \$1,000 checks. How do I sign up?**

Fact: The U.S. Government is not mailing checks in response to COVID-19 at this time. Anyone who tells you they can get you the money now is a scammer. It's important that you only trust information coming from official sources. The Federal Trade Commission recently provided more information about this scam and other common COVID-19 related scams on their website. (Yes, the federal government is working on a Coronavirus stimulus package. However, you will never be asked over the phone to provide any personal information in order to qualify or to receive funds. Beware of scams asking you for Social Security numbers, birthdates, drivers' license numbers, credit/debit card or bank account information.)



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✓ **Myth: Only those over 60 years of age and those with existing health problems are at risk from the Coronavirus.**

Fact: It is an unfortunate rumor that only people over 60 years of age are at risk of getting this disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), those at higher risk include older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions. However, symptoms can range from mild to severe and may have different complications for each individual. The CDC has a list of COVID-19 symptoms you may experience. Please continue to follow the official information from the CDC. (Most of the deaths are in the elderly, with dramatic increases for each 10 years of age older than 59. However, younger persons are still at risk for becoming ill and needing hospitalization. As of today, in California, there have been 37 cases documented in the ages 0-17 years, 1505 from 18-49 years of age, 764 in ages 50-64 years of age, and 678 at or over the age of 65.

Additional myths:

Home test kits are worthwhile – I wholeheartedly agree that our nation's testing capability has been grossly inadequate. In any void, entrepreneurs will rush to fill the gap with unauthorized tests that you can do at home via finger stick. Even though you may be frustrated and frightened, I would resist the temptation. More promising is an initiative by the Gates Foundation which would eventually provide swabs for the nose that could be sent to a laboratory for testing. In the meantime, the Alpine County Health Department Clinic offers visits and testing to qualified individuals on Monday and Wednesdays from 8-12 and 1-5, by appointment only. At all other times, contact Barton Hospital in South Lake Tahoe or Carson Valley Medical Center in Gardnerville to see if you are a candidate to be tested. Do not just show up – you must call in advance. If you have non-emergency questions, please call our Warm Line at 530-694-1011, leave a message, and I will call you back within 24 hours.

Homemade masks are effective in preventing infection – We do not recommend the use of surgical masks, or a homemade substitute, to prevent infection. You will see much activity on the Internet with groups of big-hearted volunteers making homemade masks out of cotton or other materials. Healthcare facilities would only use them as an absolute last resort when all other supply chain sources have been exhausted. Studies have shown that cotton masks as compared to regular surgical masks are clearly inferior in preventing infection in healthcare workers using them. Our healthcare workers, including first responders, are putting their lives on the line in taking care of us as we become ill. They deserve the best in protection!

Chloroquine is a miracle drug – There have only been 2 very small clinical randomized trials using chloroquine, one with only 30 patients. At least 900 patients would be required in the study to prove



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any effectiveness. Even the small studies did not show greater effectiveness than conventional care for coronavirus infection. The drug is now being given to some hospitalized patients in New York, as part of a broad effort to find anything that might work against the illness.

Here is a link to facts as provided by the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/share-facts.html>

For up-to-date information, go to:

<https://www.alpinecountyca.gov/index.aspx?NID=430>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>

Lastly I'm including links to eight COVID-19 videos that Dr. Purvance, who is the CEO at Barton Hospital, filmed this past Monday. Please feel free to share as we're hopeful that they help address a lot of questions and concerns we're hearing in the community currently.

How Barton is preparing: <https://youtu.be/jC1T4LOqWBw>

Keeping you and your community safe: <https://youtu.be/BwVAgMa63uA>

Who is at risk? <https://youtu.be/P-NAFI5ugvs>

Potential COVID-19 exposure and what to do: <https://youtu.be/GlwQjapzDWA>

Testing: https://youtu.be/x382qvNHo_w

Flattening the curve: <https://youtu.be/7pLp8TGCFzc>

Masks: https://youtu.be/PE-j1_JwgCM

How long will this last?: <https://youtu.be/peLnc-MJDoc>



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