

COVID-19 Update 8/12/2020

Below are the most recent Coronavirus updates. If you have any questions, contact Student Health Services.



Rate of Asymptomatic Infection

In another large study from [South Korea](#), there is more data to suggest that persistently asymptomatic COVID-19 infections may be more common than we originally thought. There were 303 people isolated at a community treatment center after testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR. Of those people, 110 were asymptomatic on admission and 89 of that 110 (29% of the 303) continued to be asymptomatic throughout their stay. All persons had multiple PCR tests and were not released until they had a negative test. There was also no significant difference in the viral load of the symptomatic and asymptomatic persons (as evidenced by equivalent cycle thresholds for PCR tests).

Since asymptomatic people are not coughing and sneezing, you can hope that they might infect others less frequently. The flip side is that because they don't feel ill, they will continue their usual activities, producing respiratory droplets and aerosol particles with breathing and talking that can transmit SARS-CoV-2. This reinforces the need to wear your mask, social distance and wash your hands no matter how normal you or the people around you feel.

Indirect Evidence that Masks Reduce Viral Dose Which May Reduce Severity of Illness

We know from previous studies of influenza virus that even simple masks can reduce the dose of virus inhaled and that the dose of influenza virus exposure makes a difference in severity of illness. Nobody would agree to do the same dose-of-exposure trials for SARS-CoV-2 virus in people but there are animal studies and [indirect evidence](#) that masks reduce infection rates and that lower exposures may result in milder disease.

Regarding milder disease as a result of lower exposure, of the 634 persons on the Diamond Princess cruise ship in February with a positive PCR test, 80% were symptomatic whereas of the 128 PCR positive passengers on an Argentinian cruise in March, only 20% were symptomatic. The passengers of both cruise ships were quarantined in their cabins when illness was recognized but the Argentinian passengers were also given masks to wear after the first person became feverish. With what we know now, no one could in good conscience do a randomized trial of mask versus no mask.

When the News is About How the Numbers are Reported, You Know that Isn't Good

Nobody wanted to hear last week that there were an unknown number of COVID test results in the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalREDIE) that haven't been reported due to a [computer "glitch"](#) of unknown duration. Labs processing tests send reports to the state and then the state sends numbers to the counties. Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's Health and Human Services director was quoted on 8/10/2020 saying the glitch involved 250,000 to 300,000 test results and that the problems are fixed, and the backlogged data has been shared with county health officials. But when you look at the L.A. County COVID dashboard on 8/11, they say they are still waiting to hear about backlogged results. Apparently the CalREDIE runs on technology that was as antiquated as the systems used in the DMV and Employment Development Department.

What We CAN Say About the L.A. County Numbers

We won't know until later how many of those backlogged tests are cases in L.A. County but at least the numbers we DO have are showing slow improvement with daily average new cases of 2,364 for 8/5-8/11. Sadly, our case positivity rate for 8/5-8/11 is still a depressing 11.3%. The percentage change in hospitalization and ICU numbers for L.A. County and the state are definitely improving (at low and near double digit rates over the past week) and the numbers of hospitals reporting that data has almost stabilized after reporting was switched from the CDC to the federal Health and Human Services Department in mid-July.

What We All Want to Be Able to Say

Image adapted from: <https://makeameme.org/meme/goodnight-moon-goodnight-9a0861b903>

Basic Preventive Measures

In an article about [how the U.S. has gotten to where it is](#) with COVID-19, Dr. Thomas R. Frieden who ran the New York City Health Department and the CDC. for a combined 15 years observed, “This isn’t actually rocket science, we know what to do, and we’re not doing it.” The things we know we can do include:

WASH YOUR HANDS

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

WEAR A CLOTH FACE MASK

ISOLATE/QUARANTINE WHEN INDICATED

CHOOSE GREAT VENTILATION

GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Quick Links to Resources

- If you have had close contact with a suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19 or are having [symptoms of COVID-19](#):
 - Check with your healthcare provider about testing
 - If you don’t have insurance, use this interactive map to find drive-up and walk-up testing sites, all by appointment: <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing/>
- If you are looking for a test because you had close contact with a suspected/confirmed case or because you have symptoms, you need to quarantine/isolate. L.A. County updated their isolation instructions on 7/27/2020 – use the link to get up-to-date instructions:
 - Short URL for home quarantine instructions webpage with multiple languages: ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine
 - Short URL for home isolation instructions webpage with multiple languages: ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation

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