How is UMass Memorial preparing for coronavirus?
By having the following systems in place, we can quickly respond should we have a local outbreak.

- We’ve put our Incident Command System into action, with leadership meeting daily to develop plans and review updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and others.
- A 70+ person Coronavirus Task Force, including clinical and nonclinical experts spanning our entire health system, are coming together to develop plans.
- We’re providing regular updates to our physicians and staff.
- A special section on our website – www.umassmemorial.org/coronavirus has been created for our caregivers and community.
- We’re in regular contact with state, federal, and local agencies, all of whom are responding to the situation. We’re in regular contact with DPH and watching CDC updates.
- Also, one of our infectious disease physicians has been part of a small group working to update the governor.

How do I know if my provider has been traveling to an impacted country?
We’ve been working closely with our providers to clarify our organizational expectations in accordance with the CDC guidelines. We’ve asked all providers to notify our employee health team if they’re at risk from a potential travel-related exposure.

What if I have an upcoming appointment?
Call first if you have an upcoming appointment and are experiencing a fever, NEW cough (within the last seven days) or NEW shortness of breath. Call the office where your appointment is scheduled for guidance. We request that you don’t come in for your upcoming appointment without calling first. We request that you don’t come to emergency departments, urgent care sites or offices to have those particular symptoms evaluated as you may pass on your illness to others.

What do I do if I have a fever, new cough or new shortness of breath?
If you’re experiencing a fever, NEW cough (within the last seven days) or NEW shortness of breath, call your primary care physician’s office for guidance. We request that you don’t come to emergency departments, urgent care sites or offices to have those particular symptoms evaluated as you may pass on your illness to others.

I’m worried about coming to the hospital. What do I need to know?
We take our patients’ health very seriously, and we’ve implemented procedures to ensure the safety of our patients and caregivers. The hospital is a safe place. For everyone’s safety, we are screening all patients coming in for appointments for the coronavirus. Upon arrival for your appointment, you will be asked about recent travel and symptoms, including fever, new cough, or new shortness of breath. You may be asked to wear a mask and sanitize your hands. If you have any questions or concerns, please call your health care provider.
**What does having a “new” cough mean?**
A new cough means these symptoms started less than seven days ago.

**What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?**
Anyone experiencing fever, cough or sore throat should stay home from work or school for at least seven days. You shouldn’t return until one to two days after the symptoms end. Wash your hands frequently. And as always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. You may want to call your primary care physician, especially if you feel your symptoms are severe. If you have difficulty breathing, etc., seek treatment immediately, but call ahead.

**What should I do if someone I live with is sick with flu-like symptoms?**
Separate yourself from other people and animals. If the symptoms are severe, the person should call to see a medical provider. If the affected person has had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of the coronavirus, your provider can offer further steps to take.

**What if I have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19?**
We recommend following CDC guidelines:
Household members, intimate partners, and caregivers outside a health care setting may have close contact with a person with symptomatic, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or a person under investigation. Close contacts should monitor their health; they should call their health care provider right away if they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.

**If I have a cold or flu, should I stay home from work?**
Yes. If you have a cold, but don’t have flu-like symptoms, you should still stay home. You may still be at risk of infecting others with a variety of other viruses that can cause these symptoms. If you have flu-like symptoms (cough, fever, etc.) staying home is particularly important as flu is easily transferred from one person to another. If you have symptoms and are already at work, you should go home.

**Is there a vaccine for the coronavirus?**
At this time, there’s no vaccine for coronavirus – all the more reason to keep washing your hands!

**Should I send my children to school?**
Yes. There’s no reason to keep children at home unless they’re sick.

**How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?**
Use the same steps as you would to protect yourself from seasonal flu and other infections:
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or alcohol-based foam/cleaners), especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Cough into your arm or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue away. Remind others to do this, too.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Remember, the elderly and others with health issues are the most vulnerable.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
**What can I do to stop spreading germs?**

**Stop germs! Wash your hands.** Keeping your hands clean is one of the most important things you can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.

**When should I wash my hands?**
- After using the bathroom
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

**Is there a correct way to wash my hands?**
- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails and jewelry.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end, twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air-dry them.

**Why is this being treated different than the flu? Is it spreading faster?**
We don't yet have complete information on COVID-19, however, the rate of transmission based on information at this point suggests that it’s more transmissible than the flu. There are ongoing studies to further determine this.

**With so much information about COVID-19, what are some reliable, factual sources?**
UMass Memorial is using the below websites as resources:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Coronavirus Homepage
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Coronavirus Homepage

**Like the flu, will COVID-19 have less of an impact with the warmer weather?**
Per the CDC:
It isn’t yet known if weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months, but that doesn’t mean it’s impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time, it’s not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There’s much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19. Investigations are ongoing.