

UPDATE from USM Student Health Services on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 5, 2020

University of Southern Mississippi Student Health Services are joining health officials worldwide in closely monitoring the outbreak of illness caused by the newly identified coronavirus (COVID-19). The epicenter of this outbreak is Wuhan, China, but additional cases have been identified in a growing number of other international locations, including the United States. **To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 reported at USM or in Mississippi.** However, health officials worldwide recognize that this is a rapidly evolving situation and that recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. State Department, and the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) are being updated frequently as needed.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

The USM Moffitt Health Center is strategically monitoring the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Mississippi State Department of Health and is working closely with campus partners to prepare for the possibility of COVID-19 at the University. While the risk of COVID-19 to the American public remains low currently, the situation is rapidly evolving and it is important to remain vigilant and cautious. University officials have an Infectious Disease Emergency Response Plan in place that will be activated should the need arise.

PREVENTION:

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Follow CDC recommendations for using a facemask. Facemasks should be used by people who are ill to prevent the spread of the disease to others and for healthcare workers who are taking care of ill patients.

- Wash your hands often with soap & water for at least 20 seconds OR use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

IF YOU ARE RETURNING FROM AN AFFECTED COUNTRY OR AREA:

To slow the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) into the United States, the CDC has new guidelines for travelers returning from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread (Level 3 Travel Health Notice).

- Stay home for 14 days (self-isolation) and monitor your health
- Take your temperature with a thermometer two times daily and monitor for symptoms
- Practice social distancing and avoidance of any crowded areas
- If you get sick with fever (T 100.4F or higher), cough, or have trouble breathing then seek medical care. See below instructions about what to do if you are sick.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>

SYMPTOMS:

Symptoms may range from mild to severe and may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- FEVER (Temp 100.4 F or higher)
- COUGH
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK:

CALL AHEAD to a healthcare professional if you develop fever, cough or shortness of breath **AND** you have recently traveled to an area of ongoing spread **OR** you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19. Your healthcare professional will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Moffitt Health Center direct line is 601-266-5390.

Stay home and self-isolate except to get medical care.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

USM TRAVEL PROHIBITION:

Conditions, alerts and information regarding any country can change at any time. Check CDC and State Department recommendations frequently.

University personnel travel and programs scheduled to areas under

- CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice OR
- CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice OR
- U.S. State Department Travel Advisory Level 4

due to COVID-19 are under a **USM TRAVEL PROHIBITION** until further notice.

The University also **strongly recommends** that everyone reconsider personal travel to any country with any of the following advisories, due to COVID-19:

- CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice OR
- CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice OR
- U.S. State Department Travel Advisory Level 3 OR
- U.S. State Department Travel Advisory Level 4

If you have questions about scheduled University travel to an area under any CDC level or what these restrictions mean for you, please contact the Office of Study Abroad.

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

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

WEBSITES:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420.html
- https://www.usm.edu/student-health-services/monitoring_coronavirus.php

CONTACTS:

- [Student Health Services at Moffitt Health Center \(601\) 266-5390](tel:6012665390)
- [Dean of Students Office \(601\) 266-6028](tel:6012666028)
- [Mississippi State Department of Health HOTLINE \(877\) 978-6453](tel:8779786453)
- [Office of Study Abroad \(601\) 266-4344](tel:6012664344)

The University will circulate timely notices regarding any changes in the University's strategies to responsibly prevent and monitor these public health concerns.

Sincerely,

Melissa B. Roberts, M.D.

Executive Director

Student Health Services at Moffitt Health Center

