



International House

Last updated March 09, 2020

Summary

International House continues to closely follow the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak that was first identified in Wuhan, China in December. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we want you to know that we are doing everything possible in collaboration with medical authorities and other outside experts to ensure we take all prudent precautions optimize life at the House for all.

Please check your e-mail regularly for these updates. The Office of Global Wellness utilizes resident contact information on file with the Admissions Office. Residents, kindly be sure to let Admissions know if there are changes to your e-mail or mobile telephone contact information.

1. **No COVID-19 Pending or Identified Cases at International House.** There are currently no identified or pending cases of COVID-19 among International House residents.
2. **No one Under Quarantine at International House.** International House has determined it does not have the necessary accommodations at this time to quarantine pending or any positive cases of COVID-19.
3. **911 Emergency Services Policy Change.** As of March 9, you must notify the front desk if you are seeking an ambulance due to symptoms of COVID-19 and provided you are able to do so, remain in your room until emergency services arrive. Anyone calling 911 must notify the dispatcher that you or the patient is calling because they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. EMS will dispatch a team that is prepared to transport you safely and to limit the spread of COVID-19. Due to guidance of the health department, this is a significant change in the International House current policy. Typically, residents may come to the front desk or call an ambulance themselves. The point to remember is that if you are experiencing serious symptoms of COVID19 and you or International House calls 911, you must tell them you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The dispatcher will query you briefly and then send a team that will be able to transport you safely.
4. **I-House Will Assist Residents Who Require Alternate Accommodations.** Residents who are pending results of a COVID-19 test or positive with mild symptoms will not be able to self-isolate at International House. International House in collaboration with health authorities will assist residents to make alternate accommodations.
5. **Admitted Resident Policy Change.** As of March 9, admitted residents to International House traveling from Iran, Italy, South Korea and Japan will not be allowed to enter International House until they have passed an incubation period of 14 days in New York

City and will be required to submit documentation, electronically, prior to their arrival at International House. This list may change as more information becomes available.

6. **Guest Policy Change.** Effective immediately, until further notice, outside guests may not be signed into the House. International House maintains a small number of rooms for external guests. International House will discontinue guest room accommodations.
7. **Resident Pub Events.** Outside performers for Pub events are suspended, effective immediately.
8. **Travel Guidelines.** In an abundance of caution, International House residents are strongly urged to postpone any non-essential international travel. Residents who travel, internationally, must register their travel with the Office of Global Health and Wellness here: globalhealthandwellness@ihouse-nyc.org
9. **Domestic Travel.** International House strongly urges residents to postpone travel in the United States where sustained transmission of the virus is reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
10. **Global Tracking.** International House is following the outbreak at the international level through the World Health Organization (WHO) and implementing evidence-based directives of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Health Department (NYSDOH) and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Health (DOHMH). International House also collaborates with its affiliates at NYP/Columbia University Irving Medical Center.
11. **Health Authorities in New York and International House Are Prepared.** According to NYSDOH and the DOHMH, International House will be contacted directly of any pending cases that impact the International House community. Health authorities will also reach out to individuals, directly. Residents are encouraged to advise the Office of Global Health and Wellness if they are contacted by any health authority.

Questions and Answers on COVID-19 and International House COVID-19 Action Plan

What are coronaviruses and COVID-19? Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses such as the common cold, and more severe illnesses such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and COVID-19. Coronaviruses commonly circulate in animals and sometimes also infect humans.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms related to COVID-19 include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny nose
- difficulty breathing

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia and other complications, especially in infants, older individuals, and in those with underlying health conditions.

How is COVID-19 transmitted? The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet/1.8 meters). The spread is believed to be via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and landing in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What is the incubation period of the COVID-19 virus? The current evidence suggests a typical incubation period as 2 to 14 days. The incubation period is the time from exposure of the virus to the development of symptoms.

How long does the COVID-19 virus survive on surfaces?

Studies suggest that coronaviruses (and preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment). If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others.

How do I prevent COVID-19?

Current evidence demonstrates that much can be done by taking these precautions to reduce your risk of infection by avoiding exposure and destroying viruses before they enter the system. These simple facts go a long way:

Wash your hands often using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Avoid close or prolonged contact with people who are experiencing symptoms.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

If you have cold and cough symptoms, make sure to cover your coughs and sneezes by using the bend of your arm (elbow) or using disposable tissues and immediately disposing of them in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Should we be using masks? No. Medical evidence suggests that masks are required for healthcare professionals treating persons under investigation for COVID-19 in hospitals or other

healthcare settings, for those with symptoms, for persons under investigation for COVID-19 in transport to a medical facility, or individuals who may spread respiratory infection.

Wearing a mask is an individual choice to guard against pollution or other health concerns, but there is no evidence that wearing a mask supports public health against COVID-19. The CDC, the NYSDOH, the New York City DOHMH and International House are not currently recommending masks to prevent transmission of COVID-19.

What is the current status of the virus at International House?

There are no identified or pending cases of COVID-19 among International House residents.

International House residents are generally considered to be in a low risk group. However, individuals with underlying health conditions designated by the CDC, regardless of age may have an elevated risk. These include: People who have severe chronic medical conditions, for example, heart, lung or kidney disease and older adults. Early data suggest older people are twice as likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. If you are at increased risk for COVID-19 complications due to age or because you have a severe underlying medical condition, it is especially important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of exposure.

What are the current International House actions to protect the health of our community?

International House is following the outbreak at the international level through the World Health Organization (WHO) and implementing evidence-based directives of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Health Department (NYSDOH) and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Health (DOHMH). International House also collaborates with its affiliates at NYP/Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

According to NYSDOH and the DOHMH, International House will be contacted directly of any pending cases that impact the International House community. Health authorities will also reach out to individuals, directly. Residents are encouraged to advise the Office of Global Health and Wellness if they are contacted by any health authority due to COVID-19 exposure.

International House has increased cleaning of all public and common spaces throughout the North and South Buildings. This includes but is not limited to elevator call buttons and cabs, exterior and interior door handles, South Building public restrooms, water fountains, pub and game room, public restrooms in common areas, Claremont and Riverside desk areas, and computer lab equipment. The Dining Hall and kitchen areas, as well as both Laundry rooms will be cleaned with increased frequency; the Fitness Center will be sanitized 3 times daily. Staff levels will be available on weekends for additional cleaning in all areas of both buildings.

Are there any restrictions on travel?

In an abundance of caution, International House residents are strongly urged to postpone any non-essential international travel. Residents who travel, internationally, must register their travel with the Office of Global Health and Wellness here: globalhealthandwellness@ihouse-nyc.org

International House strongly urges residents to postpone travel in the United States where sustained transmission of the virus is reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Admitted residents to International House traveling from Iran, Italy and Japan will not be allowed to enter International House until they have passed an incubation period of 14 days in New York City and will be required to submit documentation, electronically, prior to their arrival at International House.

According to federal guidelines, travelers who have been in China during the past 14 days, including US citizens or residents and others who are allowed to enter the United States, will be required to enter through specific airports and participate in monitoring by health officials until 14 days after they left China. Some people may have their movement restricted or be asked to limit their contact with others until the 14-day period has ended.

Will the guest policy change? Yes. Effective immediately, until further notice, outside guests may not be signed into the House. Additionally, International House will discontinue bookings for its guest room accommodations.

How can I stay healthy at the House while enjoying activities and events?

Please exercise the usual precautions associated with seasonal illnesses like colds and flu.

- Stay home to rest and drink plenty of fluids
- Contact your health care provider for guidance (see details herein)
- Limit contact with other household members
- Do not share items like drinking glasses, towels, eating utensils.
- Wipe down high touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, telephones, remote controls, and bathroom surfaces) often with a standard household disinfectant such as Clorox® wipes.

What is the treatment for COVID-19? There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19 infection. People infected with COVID-19 are treated with supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Is there a vaccine?

Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19.

How do I know if its COVID-19 or something else, like a cold or the flu?

COVID-19 symptoms and cold/flu symptoms are similar. If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, especially within 14 days after travel from an impacted region, or close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. Your provider will use the guidance from health authorities to determine if you need to be tested. Only a health care provider can recommend an individual be tested for COVID-19 based on evaluating your symptoms.

How do you test for COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, see a healthcare provider immediately, preferably your primary care provider. Call ahead if you can. They will likely provide you with a place to wait separately from other patients and obtain a travel history. They will screen you for the symptoms of COVID-19. A medical provider will also rule out other seasonal viruses (currently more than 25 varieties) that present similarly to the symptoms of COVID-19.

The medical provider will call the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to discuss and determine if you should be tested for COVID-19 infection.

2. DOHMH will advise on next steps, including specimen collection and where you should go next.

Are there any residents in quarantine at International House?

No. International House has determined it does not have the necessary accommodations at this time to quarantine pending or positive cases of COVID-19.

What will happen if an ambulance is called to International House for someone who notifies I-House they are sick with symptoms of COVID-19?

You must notify the front desk that you are seeking an ambulance due to symptoms of COVID-19 and remain in your room until emergency services arrive. Anyone calling 911 must notify the operator that you or the patient is calling because they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. EMS will dispatch a team that is prepared to transport you safely and to limit the spread of COVID-19. Due to guidance of the health department, this is a significant change in the International House current policy. Typically, residents may come to the front desk or call an ambulance themselves. The point to remember is that if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and you or International House calls 911, you must tell them you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The dispatcher will query you briefly and then send a team that will be able to transport you safely. Residents who are pending results of a COVID-19 test will not be able to self-isolate at International House.

How can people manage the costs of testing?

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo issued a directive requiring health insurers in New York to waive cost sharing (co-pays & co-insurance) associated with in-network COVID-19 testing, including emergency room, office visits, and urgent care visits. Currently all COVID-19 tests being conducted at the State's Wadsworth Lab are fully covered.

Are children more susceptible to the virus that causes COVID-19 compared with the general population and how can infection be prevented?

No, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Infections in children have been reported, including in very young children. From limited information published from past Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreaks, infection among children was relatively uncommon.

Children should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection, including cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding people who are sick, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including influenza vaccine.

Limited reports of children with COVID-19 in China have described cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and cough. Gastrointestinal symptoms (vomiting and diarrhea) have been reported in at least one child with COVID-19. These limited reports suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms.

Are pregnant women more susceptible to infection, or at increased risk for severe illness, morbidity, or mortality with COVID-19, compared with the general public?

We do not have information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19. Pregnant women also might be at risk for severe illness, morbidity, or mortality compared to the general population as observed in cases of other related coronavirus infections [including severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)] and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, during pregnancy. Pregnant women should adhere to the directives of their medical provider and engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection like washing hands often and avoiding people who are sick.

What are the next steps? International House will notify residents as this rapidly situation evolves. Questions regarding International House policy and implementation of International House Action Director Global Health and Wellness Services at globalhealthandwellness@ihouse-nyc.org