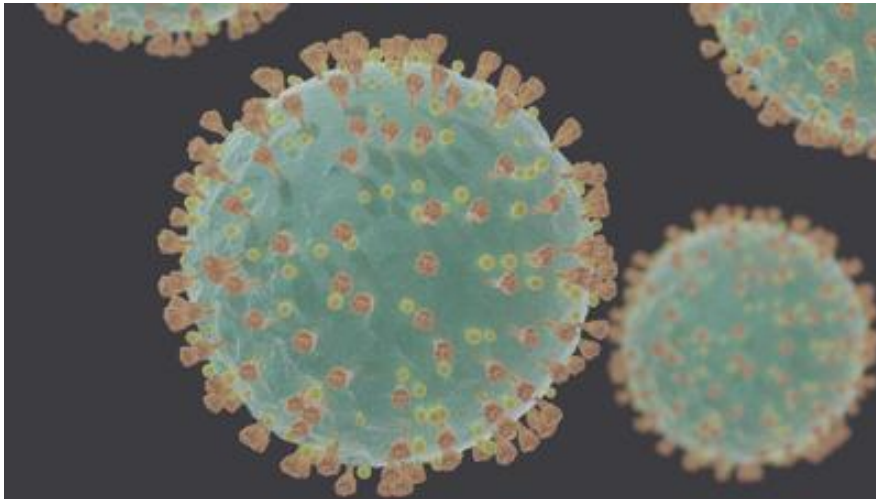


# First case of novel coronavirus confirmed in San Bernardino County.

Jesse Dinkel - Mar 15, 2020 Updated Mar 15, 2020



This image is a computer generated representation of COVID-19 virions (SARS-CoV-2) under electron microscope. Photo by Felipe Esquivel Reed

San Bernardino County today, March 15, recorded its first case of novel coronavirus. The case appeared in a Kaiser Fontana patient who returned from London, U.K., sometime last week. The test was administered by Quest Diagnostics on Thursday, March 12. The results were reported to the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health today.

The patient, a 53-year-old female, presented herself to the Kaiser Fontana emergency department on March 12 with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. The County Department of Public Health is working to identify the patient's contacts to monitor them for signs and symptoms of the illness and to take measures to prevent transmission. As should always be the case, people experiencing symptoms of contagious illness should seek medical guidance, not attend work or school, and avoid unnecessary contact with other people.

“We knew it was only a matter of time before we recorded our first case,” said Acting County Health Officer Dr. Erin Gustafson. “This does not change our level of readiness and alert because the county is in a state of emergency, we are prepared from a public health standpoint,

and our residents, cities, businesses and other key communities have been informed about safe practices.”

“The health risk from COVID-19 to the general public in San Bernardino County remains low at this time, but everyone is strongly urged to engage in practices that reduce the risk of spread,” Dr. Gustafson said.

“While this patient and her loved ones are in our thoughts and prayers, we want to commend the community for its strength and resilience in the face of this challenge,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “Avoiding panic and heeding the advice of public health professionals is the path that will lead us through this crisis.”

On Tuesday, March 10, the County Public Health Officer and the Board of Supervisors declared a local health emergency to help ensure county government and the public would be prepared for the possibility that coronavirus would appear within the county.

On Thursday, March 12, the County Public Health Officer ordered the immediate cancellation or postponement of gatherings of more than 250 people within the county until further notice. Smaller gatherings should refer to guidance from the California Department of Public Health, which can be found [here](#).

Various appropriate county departments and agencies have been working together since Jan. 25 to prepare for the possible arrival of the virus within the county. That is when the county was notified an aircraft carrying U.S. citizens evacuated from the region in China where the virus had originated might be arriving at Ontario International Airport. The flight was eventually diverted to Riverside County. The County Department of Public Health activated its Department Operations Center on Feb. 13.

As with any virus, especially during the cold and flu season, there are a number of steps you can take to protect your health and those around you:

- As should always be the case, people experiencing symptoms of contagious illness should seek medical guidance, not attend work or school, and avoid unnecessary contact with other people.

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipes.
- N95 masks are not recommended outside a healthcare setting. Surgical masks can be worn by sick individuals to reduce the likelihood of spreading germs to others.

For more information on COVID-19, please call (800) 722-4794 or visit the County Public Health COVID-19 webpage at [wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus](http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus). Information is updated as soon as it is made available.

Anyone with questions or concerns can contact County Public Health at [coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov](mailto:coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov).