

Frequently Asked Questions

Novel Coronavirus COVID-19

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is a novel coronavirus?

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold.”

How does the virus spread?

The CDC reports the virus is spreading from person-to-person: “It’s important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (community spread) in some affected geographic areas. Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

Where can I learn more about the novel coronavirus COVID-19?

The [CDC website](#) has numerous resources, including information on how the virus spreads, prevention and treatment info, situation updates and travel alerts. For local information, see the [Pinellas County Health Department](#) site.

How can I protect myself from getting sick?

Practice everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough.
- Sneeze into a tissue then throw the tissue away in the trash. Wash your hands afterwards.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Get a flu shot. While it won't protect you against COVID-19, it will help protect you against the flu, which kills up to 61,000 Americans each year.

[For more prevention and treatment information, visit the CDC website.](#)

COLLEGE RESPONSE

What is the College doing to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak?

The College’s Emergency Management Council, made up of leaders in all functional areas throughout the College, has been monitoring the outbreak since it was first reported. They have been in contact

with local and state health and emergency management officials, as well as the Florida College System and the Florida Department of Education.

Is the College aware of any students, faculty or staff who have been exposed to COVID-19?

As of March 11, 2020, we know of no members of the SPC community who have been exposed to COVID-19. (On Tuesday, March 10, the [Florida Department of Health announced that two people in Pinellas County have tested positive for the virus.](#))

Does the College plan on closing?

As U.S. and Florida health officials have said that the risk to the general U.S. public continues to remain low, the College has no plans to close or cancel events at this time. SPC has not had any cases of coronavirus on its campuses or sites. The College is working with local, state and federal health officials and has not received any guidance or mandates regarding closures.

Is it possible the College will close? How would that determination be made?

The coronavirus outbreak is a fluid situation and the College is monitoring it closely. SPC President Dr. Tonjua Williams and her Emergency Management Council is in communication with health officials, the state college system, area colleges and Pinellas County Schools. She or her designee would make any decisions concerning the discontinuation of College functions, cancellation of classes, or cessation of operations, with guidance from the Florida Department of Health, the Pinellas County Health Department and/or the CDC.

I'm a student. How will I continue my classes if the College closes?

Your academic success is important to us. If the College closes and classes are affected - including online, blended and face-to-face programs - plans will be activated to ensure students can complete their courses. For more information, SPC's [Instructional \(Academic\) Continuity Plan for Students](#) and [Instructional \(Academic\) Continuity Plan for Faculty](#) outlines this.

I am a faculty or staff member. If the College closes, will I still get paid?

The College has a [Payroll Continuation Plan](#) for SPC employees in case of emergencies.

How would I know the College was closing?

The Marketing & Strategic Communications Department as well as College leaders are sending updates as needed through email, the College's [Emergency Preparedness website](#) and social media channels. The Pinellas County Health Department and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) assists in providing information for updates. Specific updates are also being shared with students enrolled in Study Abroad programs and members of our athletic programs.

Should I cancel or avoid a College event?

Not at this time. As mentioned above, U.S. and Florida health officials have said that the risk to the general U.S. public continues to remain low.

What is the College doing to prevent the spread of germs?

The Facilities Planning and Institutional Services Department is using disinfectant cleaners in all high exposure areas, including restrooms, cafes and areas where people congregate. The department is also regularly checking all hand sanitizing dispensers are full and functional.

PERSONAL CONCERNS

What do I do if I suspect I have the virus?

Per the CDC: “Call your healthcare professional if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Your healthcare professional will work with your state’s public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.”

Additionally, the Florida Department of Health has established a call center number at (866) 779-6121, available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to midnight, as well as an email address for questions at COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

What should I do if there is a person exhibiting cold/flu symptoms near me while I am on campus or in a College building?

SPC leadership is encouraging people exhibiting cold symptoms to stay home and not come to college sites. The CDC advises to avoid close contact with people who are sick and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. They also advise frequent and thorough handwashing and disinfecting of frequently touched objects and surfaces. [For more prevention and treatment information, visit the CDC website.](#)

Should I wear a mask?

Only if you are sick, which can help protect others. Wearing a mask will not protect you from getting the virus.

How can I protect myself from getting sick?

See above response under the “GENERAL INFORMATION” section.

TRAVEL

I am traveling over spring break. What should I do after I return?

Following guidance from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees, the College requests that all employees and students who travel to **China, Iran, Italy, Japan or South Korea** self-isolate and not return to campus for 14 days after their return. Faculty will work with students affected by this request, and supervisors will work with any employees who are impacted.

Currently, there are no advisories regarding travel within the United States. However, the CDC and the U.S. State Department [are advising people – particularly those with underlying medical conditions – not to travel by cruise ship.](#)

What is the status of my study abroad trip?

The SPC Center for International Programs is monitoring travel advisories and updates provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of State and the World Health Organization. Students will be contacted directly by email if their study abroad trip is affected by coronavirus reports. Thus far, spring trips to Japan and Italy are on hold. Those who planned to take part in the aforementioned trips have received communications directly from the SPC Center for International Programs.

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