

Dear Rutgers Community Members,

We are sure you have read the news that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 is now beginning to spread within the United States. Our thoughts are with all of our global community members who have been impacted by this virus, especially those who have experienced the tragic loss of a loved one. We understand and share your concerns about this disease and we want to assure you that we are taking this situation seriously and coordinating at the highest levels of the University. Fortunately there are still no cases at Rutgers and no confirmed cases in New Jersey.

We are writing to share new information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) [which has updated its COVID-19 travel advisories](#) as follows: Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission and restrictions on entry to the United States [Warning Level 3](#) - China, Iran; Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission [Warning Level 3](#) - Italy, South Korea; Sustained (ongoing) community transmission [Alert Level 2](#) - Japan; Limited community transmission [Watch Level 1](#) - Hong Kong.

The situation regarding COVID-19 is dynamic and rapidly evolving. For these reasons, the university is restricting all official or authorized travel of students, faculty, and staff, until further notice. Toward that end, Rutgers immediately will:

1. Suspend all Rutgers operated Study Abroad programs worldwide through the end of the current semester
2. Suspend all Spring Break International Programs
3. Recommend that Rutgers faculty and staff curtail all Rutgers sponsored international travel

This includes travel for university business including, but not limited to, teaching, study abroad, conferences, presentations, internships, research, recruiting, and athletic competitions. This is also a reminder that all Rutgers faculty, staff or student groups traveling internationally on University-associated matters must register on the [MyTrips International Travel Registration Site](#). This information is collected so that, in the event of an international emergency, Rutgers will be able to locate, notify and deliver resources to those that may be affected. Travel registration is not required for personal travel or travel within the United States. We are continuing to closely monitor CDC guidance updates and will alert affected groups and the campus community as necessary.

We want to assure everyone that Rutgers Global–Study Abroad and Rutgers Student Health offices have been in contact with students whose studies have been interrupted by the travel restrictions. Support is available to anyone affected by these restrictions by contacting Rutgers Global–Study Abroad at [848-932-7787](tel:848-932-7787).

With spring break just a few weeks away, we want to encourage all community members to carefully consider their travel plans – especially those intending to travel internationally. If you are planning to travel outside of the United States, please review travel advisories available from the [U.S. State Department](#) and the [CDC](#). U.S. citizens traveling abroad can register their plans with the [State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) - this free service enables the embassy to notify travelers of safety conditions at their destination and quickly contact them in an emergency. All Rutgers community members - but especially those without U.S. citizenship - should be mindful of potential government-imposed travel restrictions as they consider travel outside of the United States, as there may be restrictions on returning to the U.S.

Further, the U.S. State Department has stated that U.S. citizens should not rely on government repatriation efforts if they are under potential risk of quarantine by local authorities. Although we are working to provide solutions to our community members who have been impacted by the global emergency, we cannot guarantee accommodations for disrupted academic programs and work.

Whether you are traveling or staying local during the spring break, you can help prevent the spread of viruses, such as the flu which is currently at high levels in NJ, by frequently washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Disinfect repeatedly, including commonly touched surfaces, avoid touching your face, and stay home if you are feeling unwell. Keep your body in peak performance by eating well, drinking plenty of fluids, and getting enough rest. During uncertain times we often feel anxious and overwhelmed - remember that wellness includes mental wellbeing and practice kindness and generosity with yourself and your neighbors. Please encourage your friends and family to do the same.

Uncertainties associated with a new illness are understandably frightening. This virus appears to be [spread by person-to-person contact](#) and cause individuals infected to suffer [symptoms](#) similar to those of the common cold or flu: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. While most cases appear to be mild and not require hospitalization, in some cases severe respiratory illness occurs. No vaccine is currently available and no anti-viral medications or treatment other than typical supportive care is recommended at this time.

To prepare for possible additional person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in the United States, the [CDC has recommended](#) that clinicians consider COVID-19 in patients with severe respiratory illness even in the absence of travel history to affected areas or known exposure to another case. If you have reason to suspect you may have been in contact with COVID-19 and are feeling unwell, please seek medical advice right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, **call ahead** and tell them about your concerns and your symptoms, avoid contact with others, don't travel while sick, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Any Rutgers employees who think they may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 should please contact their Occupational Health office **before** returning to work. Contact information for Rutgers Student Health and Occupational Health offices are included in the body of this email below our signature and on the Rutgers [COVID-19 webpage](#).

We will continue to monitor, prepare, and respond to this situation as we have since international reports of the epidemic were first made known. The University will keep the community updated about new critical information as it becomes available, and encourage you to bookmark our [COVID-19 webpage](#) for up-to-date information about the university's general guidance and preparations related to COVID-19. In addition, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System at Rutgers is serving as the NJDOH COVID-19 Call Center and is available 24 hours a day to provide assistance in multiple languages, call the hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Wishing you good health.

Vicente Gracias, MD
Senior Vice Chancellor for Clinical Affairs, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences
Vice President Health Affairs, Rutgers University

Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH
Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences
Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Rutgers University

Rutgers Student Health offices by location:

- **Rutgers–New Brunswick**
 - Call [848-932-7402](tel:848-932-7402)
 - Locations and hours can be found at health.rutgers.edu/locations.
 - Make an appointment online via our [Patient Portal](#) (requires NetID)
 - Local Hospitals
 - Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital - Phone: [732-828-3000](tel:732-828-3000)
 - St. Peter's University Hospital - Phone: [732-745-8600](tel:732-745-8600)
- **Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences**
 - Newark [973-972-8219](tel:973-972-8219)
 - New Brunswick [732-235-5160](tel:732-235-5160)
- **Rutgers–Newark**
 - Call [973-353-5232](tel:973-353-5232)
 - Visit Blumenthal Hall, Room 104
 - Email: stuhlth@newark.rutgers.edu
- **Rutgers–Camden**
 - Call [856-225-6005](tel:856-225-6005)
 - Visit the Campus Center, second floor

Rutgers Occupational Health offices by location:

- Rutgers University New Brunswick, Newark and Camden: [848-932-8254](tel:848-932-8254)
- Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) Newark: [973-972-2900](tel:973-972-2900)
- RBHS New Brunswick/Piscataway: [848-445-0123 ext. 2](tel:848-445-0123)
- Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Faculty and Staff: [732-235-6559](tel:732-235-6559)