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UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Updates for USG

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LIVE UPDATES 4:51pm, Thursday, March 19, 2020

State Department Issues 'Do Not Travel' Advisory

The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19.

What you need to know:

- [USG Institutions Working to Issue Partial Refunds](#)
- [USG Institutions to Develop Creative Alternatives to Commencement Ceremony](#)
- [USG Moves to Online Instruction for Remainder of Semester](#)
- [Gov. Kemp Declares Public Health Emergency for Georgia](#)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health launches new website for tracking COVID-19 cases](#)
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In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period.

More details are available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/travel-advisory-alert-global-level-4-health-advisory-issue.html>

USG Institutions Working to Issue Partial Refunds

UPDATED 10:41am, Thursday, March 19, 2020

All 26 University System of Georgia institutions are working as quickly as possible to issue partial refunds to students, especially those required to move out of on-campus housing and those who no longer have access to dining services. Other fees may also be partially refunded, and more information will be forthcoming soon to our campus communities.

USG Institutions to Develop Creative Alternatives to Commencement Ceremony

UPDATED 5:58pm, Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Students will still graduate consistent with academic standards, but the actual ceremonies will not be held as originally scheduled.

The USG continues to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance to avoid gatherings of more than 50 people.

“We don’t make this decision lightly, nor do we want to diminish all our students have achieved,” USG Chancellor Steve Wrigley said. “Our institutions are working on creative, alternative ways to celebrate their students’ accomplishments, and I am grateful for the commitment and dedication our students have shown in the face of extraordinary times. They have worked hard and rightfully expect to celebrate and mark their graduation.”

For details on institutional plans for commencement, please visit institutional websites. Students and campus communities should also look for ongoing institutional communication as more details are forthcoming.

USG Moves to Online Instruction for Remainder of Semester

UPDATED 4:47pm, Monday, March 16, 2020

This action comes following last week’s decision to suspend instruction for two weeks to ensure business and instructional continuity, and to allow further state assessment of COVID-19.

Students are not allowed to return to campus until they receive permission from their institution, which will be forthcoming soon.

Additionally, residence halls will be closed, with minimal exceptions for students unable to return home, or who cannot find housing elsewhere. Students will receive specific instructions from campus leaders regarding when they will be allowed to return to campus to retrieve their belongings from residence halls. Students must follow those instructions. For those students who are unable to depart campus, we will make every effort to accommodate these students.

USG will be providing guidance to campuses on refunds for housing, dining, and other services. Students should wait for their campus to contact them.

Institutions will remain open, with minimal staff physically on-site, to ensure continuity of certain services.

In the end, we want to ensure that our faculty, staff and students are safe; that we do our part to help stem the spread of the coronavirus in Georgia; and that we fulfill our mission to graduate our students even in the face of these challenging times.

Gov. Kemp Declares Public Health Emergency for Georgia

UPDATED 9:37am, Friday, March 13, 2020

In a news release, Kemp said the declaration—effective Saturday, March 14—would help state health and emergency officials deploy all available resources to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in Georgia.

Kemp said he would ask state lawmakers to return to the Capitol on March 16 to ratify the action through a joint resolution. The Georgia General Assembly decided Thursday to suspend the legislative session over concerns about the coronavirus.

The governor further emphasized the need for faith-based groups and similar entities to use caution when gathering in public.

“At this time, it is appropriate ... to consider cancellation of public events and services. Contact your local public health office or consult official sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, for helpful guidance on decision-making. Elderly citizens and those with chronic, underlying health conditions face a serious threat to their health, and we must do everything in our power to reduce risk associated with this virus,” Kemp said in the release.

Georgia Department of Public Health launches new website for tracking COVID-19 cases

UPDATED 9:31am, Friday, March 13, 2020

Late on March 12, the Governor’s Office and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) announced a new resource is available for monitoring confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

[Visit the site](#) for up-to-date numbers, locations and demographic breakdowns of COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths. The site will be updated daily at midnight.

Continue to monitor this site for updates related to the University System of Georgia.

USG Suspends Instruction to Assess Continuity Plans, Online Instruction

UPDATED 4:00pm, Thursday, March 12, 2020

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp today announced state agencies, school systems and local communities have been given the flexibility to implement closures.

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020, all University System of Georgia institutions will temporarily suspend instruction for two weeks to allow time for USG institutions to test their business continuity plans and online instruction modules and for state officials to continue to assess the current situation regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) in Georgia.

Students who are currently on spring break are strongly encouraged not to return to campus. Students on campus are asked to depart campus by close of business Friday, March 13, 2020, and to remain away from campus until March 29, 2020. At this time, students are not being asked to move out of their dorms for the remainder of the

semester. For students who are unable to leave campus, institutions have been asked to develop plans to safely accommodate those students on campus.

As circumstances change, the USG is providing regular updates to its institutions and the public on this site.

CDC Issues Travel Guidance

UPDATED 11:00am, Thursday, March 12, 2020

We take very seriously the responsibility to make prudent choices for the well-being of our USG community. We have been actively monitoring the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation in conjunction with the governor's office, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH).

While we understand the concerns around COVID-19, it is extremely important our campus communities stay calm and not panic. Public health officials, including those from DPH and CDC, continue to stress the overall risk level in Georgia associated with COVID-19 is low.

You can look for updates from the USG on this site, [from the CDC](#), and from the [Georgia DPH](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued an update on people at risk for serious illness from COVID-19. The updated guidance is as follows:

Warning - Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel—Widespread Sustained Transmission Key Points

- On March 11, President Donald Trump announced a ban on most travel from Europe, excluding the United Kingdom. The exceptions are outlined in the [Presidential proclamation](#).
- Europe is experiencing widespread sustained transmission of [respiratory illness caused by COVID-19](#).
- CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the specified countries in Europe. See: [What countries are included in this notice](#).
- CDC also continues to advise against travel to previously designated Warning Level 3 or higher countries: China, South Korea, Italy and Iran.
- Older adults and people of any age with serious chronic medical conditions are at increased risk for severe disease.
- Travelers should avoid contact with sick people and wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Travelers returning from the specified countries in Europe must stay home for 14 days after returning from travel, monitor their health, and practice social distancing.
- Travelers who are sick with fever, cough, or have trouble breathing should call ahead before seeking medical care.

Travel notices are updated at this [CDC website](#).

If you are at [higher risk](#) of getting very sick from COVID-19, the CDC recommends:

- [Stock up on supplies](#).
- Take [everyday precautions](#) to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- [Avoid crowds](#) as much as possible.
- Avoid [cruise travel](#) and non-essential air travel.

- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, [stay home](#) as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

[Who is at Higher Risk?](#) Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease

For the latest updates from the CDC, visit the [COVID-19 website](#).

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to advise that there is a low risk of COVID-19 transmission in Georgia.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Updates for the University System of Georgia

UPDATED 8:55am, Thursday, March 5, 2020

The University System of Georgia has been closely monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and has offered direction to our institutions in line with Centers for Disease Control (CDC), State Department, and Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) guidance.

The CDC has provided the following new guidance on all student foreign travel for institutions of higher education:

Consider postponing or canceling student foreign exchange programs

Given the global outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) institutes of higher education (IHE) should consider postponing or canceling upcoming student foreign exchange programs. IHE should consider asking current program participants to return to their home country. Those overseeing student foreign exchange programs should be aware that students may face unpredictable circumstances, travel restrictions, challenges in returning home or accessing health care while abroad.

IHEs should consider asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States. IHEs should work with state and local public health officials to determine the best approach for when and how (e.g., chartered transportation for countries or areas assessed as high-risk for exposure) their study abroad students might return. All plans for returning study abroad students should be designed to protect participants from stigma and discrimination.

The COVID-19 situation is dynamic. Given the speed of spread and the number of countries experiencing human-to-human transmission, IHEs should evaluate the risks associated with choosing to maintain programs abroad and take the appropriate proactive measures. IHEs that continue to maintain programs abroad should monitor [cdc.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19) for additional information.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/student-foreign-travel.html>

Additionally, in consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), students returning from countries at a Level 3 or higher designation should self-monitor for 14 days prior to returning to campus. If a student presents with any symptoms during the self-monitoring period, the student needs to contact DPH immediately at 1-866-PUB-HLTH and seek medical assistance.

Currently, China, South Korea, Italy and Iran are under a level 3 warning from the CDC which means:

- There is a widespread, ongoing outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that can be spread from person to person.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease.

Here are links to up-to-date country-specific coronavirus-related information from the CDC:

- [CDC site on South Korea](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
- [CDC site on China](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
- [CDC site on Italy](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

Since CDC can raise or lower warning levels at any time, the system office will continue to monitor the situation closely.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your local public health district or call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584) or 404-657-2588.

As this is an evolving situation, the most up-to-date information from the CDC can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and from DPH at <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus>.

What is the difference between seasonal flu and COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses and there are different types of coronaviruses within that family, much like there are different types of influenza viruses. In the United States, there are common coronaviruses that circulate every year, which usually cause upper respiratory tract illnesses much like the common cold. Coronaviruses tend to circulate in the fall and winter months, like influenza. Most people get infected with these viruses at some point in their lives. The coronavirus that has emerged in Wuhan, China, is a new type of coronavirus and is infecting people for the first time, which means that people do not have immunity to it.

What are common symptoms of COVID-2019?

Symptoms of COVID-19 infection include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some infected individuals go on to develop pneumonia requiring hospitalization. Severity of symptoms can span from asymptomatic or mild illness to severe or fatal illness.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is spread like other respiratory illnesses, such as the flu and the common cold, through coughing or sneezing by those who already have symptoms. There have also been reports of rare spread from an infected patient with no symptoms to a close contact.

What should students or faculty who have recently traveled to China do?

Because of the ever-expanding global outbreak, the federal government recently announced that all individuals (which may include students, faculty, or staff) who have traveled to China in the past 14 days and returned on or after February 3, 2020, will be requested to remain at home and be monitored for 2019-nCoV symptoms by the

Georgia Department of Public Health. School and university students, faculty or staff whose family members have traveled from China in the last 14 days (and are being monitored for symptoms) do not need to be excluded from school.

How is COVID-19 treated?

Currently, there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. There is no vaccine to prevent this virus, and the CDC advises that the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to it.

What preventive measures should schools and universities take to help reduce the spread of respiratory illness?

The Georgia Department of Public Health recommends that schools and universities increase education about respiratory hygiene. Students, faculty, and staff should follow these steps that prevent the transmission of respiratory infections:

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, not your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you're sick, especially with a fever.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

For university students who present to Health Services:

- Students who visit health services should be instructed to wear a mask when they present with respiratory symptoms.
- Health personnel should inquire about travel history.
- Clinicians should wear person protective equipment to guard against potential exposure.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hcp-personnel-checklist.html>
- Continue to monitor up-to-date information from health officials.
- Always promote daily practice of everyday preventive actions.
- Have supplies on hand for staff and students (masks, soap, tissues, hand sanitizers, trash baskets).
- If you identify a patient suspected of having COVID-19 infection, immediately isolate them.

More Information

Outbreaks involving novel coronaviruses evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change frequently as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updated information.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Georgia Department of Public Health website: <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus>

Important Information

- [How to Prevent the Spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health COVID-19 Daily Status Report](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Main Site](#)

CONTACT

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Atlanta, GA 30334
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