COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND TRANSMISSION:

- Symptoms are very nonspecific which can make it difficult to initially determine if a patient has COVID-19 or seasonal flu, the common cold or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Symptoms often include fever, fatigue and a dry cough, and may also feature aches and pains, congestion, runny nose or sore throat.
- As of March 4, roughly 80% of cases across the globe have presented with mild to moderate symptoms – similar to those found in a common cold. Some 15% will require more intensive care.
- Current reports suggest the 1-2% of people who are not feeling well and recover and not risk exposing others to the disease. People have been working to protect and prepare themselves and their families.

“While there is no evidence right now of sustained transmission in Massachusetts, this could change. This is not cause for panic or terror, it is simply what the disease will do. People have been working extremely hard for many weeks now on this situation through the Hospital Incident Command System.”

Paul Biddinger, MD, chief, Division of Emergency Preparedness

WHEN TO WEAR, AND NOT WEAR, FACE MASKS

- N95 respirators (pictured at right) – which protect a wearer from airborne particles – should only be worn by health care providers and when caring for a patient who is on airborne isolation or strict isolation.
- Surgical masks (pictured below) should be worn by health care workers when caring for patients on droplet isolation or as part of standard precautions.
- Patients in the hospital, and the general population, should wear surgical masks when they have a fever or cough. Do not wear a surgical mask if you are not experiencing these symptoms.

PREPAREDNESS AT THE MGH:

- The MGH Biothreats Committee was created in 2003, focused on pandemic planning, trainings and preparedness measures.
- The MGH is a designated Regional Ebola and Other Special Pathogens Treatment Center, one of only 10 in the United States, offering enhanced capabilities to respond to and treat a patient with an infectious disease.

WHAT STAFF CAN DO NOW:

Ensure the MGH continues to function and lead for our patients, our staff, our communities and our families by following these key steps:

- Be flexible. Think now about what plans you can put in place should, say, schools close. Think of your contingency plans and be prepared.
- Stay informed. Be an ambassador for good information from credible sources – these include MGH and Partners HealthCare updates and Apollo, the MGH intranet, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and local and state public health departments.
- Be prepared. For emergencies of any kind, it is always good to keep supplies on hand. Visit ready.gov for preparedness checklists and plans.

“We’re very fortunate to have world-class expertise in this area of emergency preparedness. This obviously falls into the category of prepare for the worst, and hope for the best. Should anything play out, we’ll be ready for our patients, our staff and the community.”

Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president

Stop Germs! Wash Your Hands.

“Keep your hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.”

Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president