A novel coronavirus and disease (COVID-19) emerged in late 2019 and has spread to more than 100,000 persons in over 100 countries. The city of San Francisco, including all of its medical centers, is making a variety of preparations for screening and care of patients should they test positive. We do not currently know if HIV on its own can increase a person’s risk of getting COVID-19, or if HIV raises the risk of having more severe disease. It does appear that pre-existing heart or lung disease and older age can increase the risk of more severe disease.

The most important things people can do to lower risk at this time are (1) avoid crowded public spaces where contact with others is likely, (2) try to cough or sneeze into an arm/elbow (3) wash one’s hands with soap and water frequently, and avoid touching one’s face, (4) avoid handshakes and other contacts with other persons where possible. Remember that standard influenza is still circulating and it is not too late to get an influenza vaccine (“flu shot”) if you have not yet gotten one this season.

Meanwhile, it is important for people with HIV to maintain (or achieve) viral suppression with antiretroviral therapy (ART) in order to preserve the health of their immune system. You should continue to take your ART medicines every day (or start ART, if you are not already on it – discuss with your clinician), keep a supply of all your prescription medications on hand, and be sure to order refills on schedule. Let your primary provider know if you are having trouble obtaining your refills. If you are not able to reach your provider for refills, you may call the Ward 86 PHAST pager (415-443-3892) for assistance Monday-Friday, 9 AM-5 PM.

If you have flu-like symptoms, such as fever and cough, you should contact your primary provider. Many clinics are now screening patients by telephone and are asking patients not to come to clinics unless directed to do so, in order to avoid unnecessary possible exposures to the virus. Of course, if you are severely ill, you should go to an emergency room. Otherwise, your clinic will instruct you how and where your symptoms can be evaluated and treated; you will be offered testing for flu and coronavirus if clinically indicated.

If you have questions about Getting to Zero San Francisco, please contact Courtney Liebi at courtney.liebi@ucsf.edu or 628.217.7417.
For information from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

For Global Daily Updates:  https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Local Resources:

- UCSF Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Prevention COVID-19 webpage: https://infectioncontrol.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/ucsf-health-covid-19-resources