

March 1, 2020



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ANNOUNCES TWO PRESUMPTIVE POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES IN FLORIDA

Risk to Florida Public Remains Low

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Tallahassee, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health (Department) has announced there are two presumptive positive cases of 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Florida. Both individuals remain in isolation at this time. Despite these cases in Florida, the overall immediate threat to the public remains low.

Governor Ron DeSantis said, “I have been working with federal partners and our Department of Health to ensure that communities are ready to handle the challenges presented by COVID-19. The dedicated professionals at our county health departments, as well as those working at local medical providers, are well equipped to address these and future cases. State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees has taken appropriate, decisive action to help affect the best possible outcomes, and I will continue directing our state agencies to do whatever is necessary to prioritize the health and well-being of Florida residents.”

Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez said, “Florida is a national leader in public health, and that quickly became evident as soon as we received information regarding presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in our state. Public health teams from our Department of Health have already begun engaging with the impacted individuals and are quickly working towards identifying and contacting everyone who may be potentially affected by this virus. Thanks to the extensive preparations and tireless work the Department’s staff has been undertaking since information regarding COVID-19 became available in early January, our county health departments, medical providers and all other partners in public health are well prepared to prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees said, “This is the scenario that we prepare for every day in public health. The Department is moving forward with the appropriate plans, and we are working directly with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local medical providers to ensure these individuals receive the proper treatment and that anyone who has come into contact with them is following the necessary protocols, limiting or stopping any further spread. Thanks to Florida’s integrated public health system, we have been able to proactively engage and plan with

our public health partners at every level, enabling us to take these important steps in a very expeditious manner. Our epidemiological teams are among the best in the nation, and they are right now aggressively pursuing every potential lead during these critical early moments of this outbreak in Florida.”

The first patient is an adult Manatee county resident without travel history to countries identified for restricted travel by the CDC. This person did seek health care, is isolated and will continue to remain isolated until cleared by public health officials. The Florida Department of Health is working closely with the patient, their close contacts and health care providers to isolate and monitor persons who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and implement testing of anyone who may develop COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

The second patient is an adult resident of Hillsborough county with a history of travel to Italy. This person is isolated and will continue to remain isolated until cleared by public health officials.

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may land on objects and surfaces. Other people may contract COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from the COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. As a reminder, the Department always recommends everyday preventive actions to help impede the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
- Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then disposing of the tissue;
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

The CDC does not recommend that asymptomatic, healthy people wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).

A person that experiences a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and any other destination under [CDC travel advisory](#) should call ahead to their health care provider and local county health department (CHD) and mention their recent travel or close contact.

If a person has had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area or been in contact with a person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, they should call ahead to a health care professional and the county health department. The health care professional will work with the Department to determine if the person should be tested for COVID-19.

Please visit the Department's dedicated COVID-19 webpage at www.FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19. This remains the best and most up-to-date resource for information and guidance regarding COVID-19 in Florida.

For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact the Department's dedicated COVID-19 Call Center by calling **1-866-779-6121** or emailing COVID-19@flhealth.gov. **The Call Center is available Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm.**

In addition, please visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/all-county-locations.html> to locate and obtain contact information for your local CHD.

The CDC also has a website with information related to COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

About the Florida Department of Health

The Department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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