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Delaware Details Preparations for Potential Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Delaware Health and Social Services (https://news.delaware.gov/category/dhss/) | Division of Public Health (https://news.delaware.gov/category/dhss/public-health-dhss/) | News (https://news.delaware.gov/category/news/) | Date Posted: Wednesday, February 26, 2020

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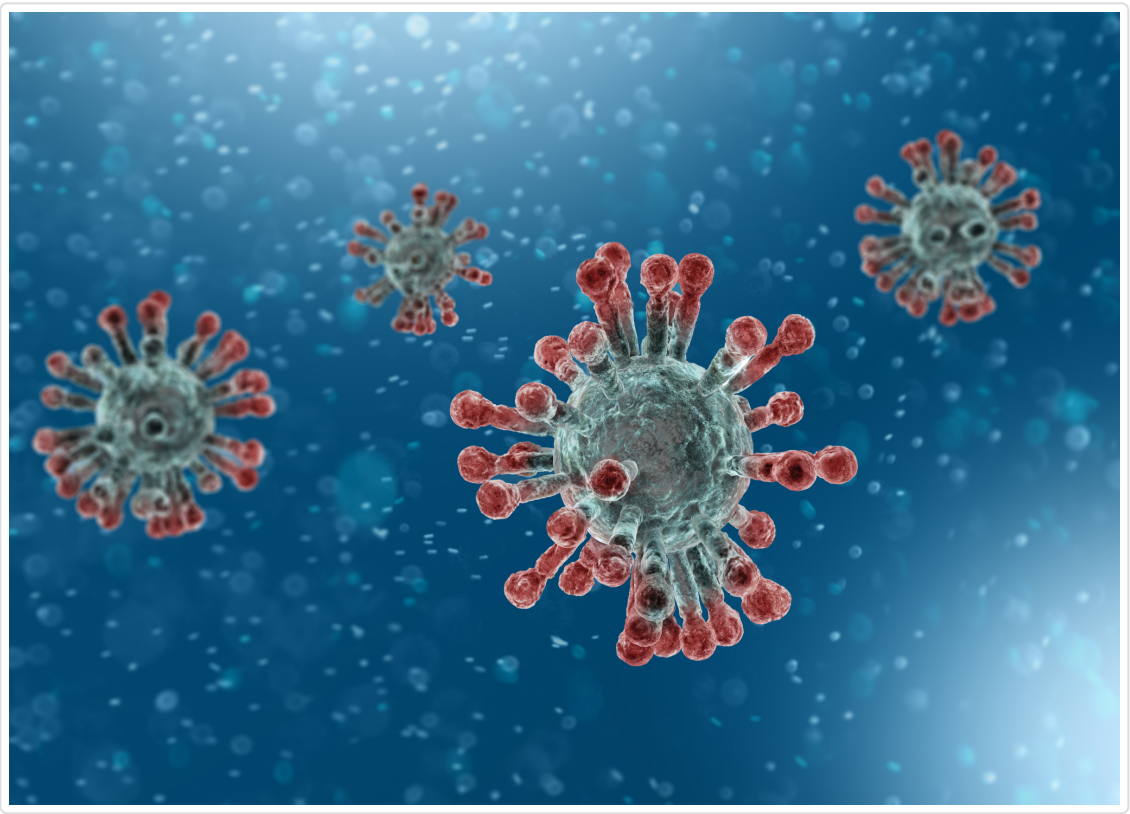

Update: Watch Live at 1pm on March 2nd as state officials update the public on preparations Delaware is taking for Coronavirus, and the steps the public can take to prevent the

spread.

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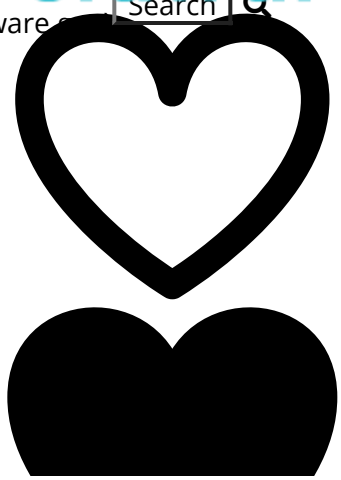

DOVER – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is actively taking steps to prepare for community spread of the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19, as well as providing information to Delawareans about the actions they can take now to make preparations. To date, no one in Delaware has tested positive for COVID-19.

“While the CDC’s comments this week indicate heightened concern, it is important to note that we have been making preparations all along to not only contain the spread of the disease, should it occur in Delaware, but also to mitigate the impact of the virus if community spread were to occur,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “As we continue to prepare for the likelihood of community spread in the U.S., we have begun stepping up our planning and preparedness efforts around mitigation strategies recommended by the CDC. In the coming days and weeks we will be having additional conversations with health care providers, schools, businesses and other state partners and stakeholders about what guidance to consider in the event of an outbreak locally.”

As of February 25, there are more than 80,000 cases of coronavirus disease worldwide, including more than 2,700 deaths. There are 57 cases and no deaths to date in the United States. The CDC expects cases to continue to be confirmed in the upcoming days and weeks, but wants everyone to take action to help prevent the spread of the virus. There is currently no community spread of the disease in the U.S., including Delaware. CDC officials also said due to the rapidly changing nature of the spread of COVID-19 around the world, it is important for families to be prepared.

CDC is recommending communities prepare for what they would do if community spread occurs by:

- Recommending schools review their infection prevention and control plans in the event there is a local outbreak in the community.
- Recommending employers in the public and private sectors review their plans to ensure they are able to operate with adaptations like telework and flexible sick leave policies, as well as how to respond if an employee gets sick.

- Providing guidance to the public about the steps they can take that would help slow the spread of illness, including staying home when sick.

“The Division of Public Health is well-prepared to lead the response regarding coronavirus disease, and this is a time to enhance our preparedness efforts,” said Governor John Carney. “DPH has infectious disease outbreak plans in place that our public health experts regularly review and practice. Delaware’s plans are being used now to guide the state’s current public health activities, and those plans are flexible, allowing us to adapt to changing situations.”

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To date, Delaware:

- Has activated the Division of Public Health’s State Health Operations Center to allow for enhanced response coordination;
- Maintains communication and outreach with federal, state and local partners;
- Coordinates testing for symptomatic persons with an associated travel history to China;
- Is monitoring asymptomatic (not sick) individuals returning from Mainland China to ensure they do not develop symptoms;
- Provides symptom monitoring guidance for residents returning to Delaware from China;
- Participates in frequent calls with health care systems, EMS and first responder agencies and other state agency partners;
- Provides information to health care professionals, businesses and educational settings; and
- Has reviewed and adapted current pandemic flu plans for COVID-19.

This health event is dynamic and evolving rapidly. DPH relies on accurate and up-to-date information from various federal and international partners to guide our preparedness and response efforts. DPH continues to follow the CDC’s guidance, and as new recommendations are released, we will continue to share that information as quickly as possible with our health care partners and the public.

DPH has a strong relationship with hospitals, EMS, and first responder agencies through its partnership with the state’s Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS). Staff have been holding regular calls with hospitals, DEMA and DSHS and EMS agencies to provide ongoing guidance about having and stocking appropriate protective equipment, and when it is needed, and providing support as needed.

Delaware is experiencing a particularly serious flu season with over 5,000 cases and 11 deaths statewide, and DPH continues to recommend everyday measures that people can take to prevent the spread of all germs – which would also slow the spread of coronavirus disease: cover coughs and sneezes, stay home when sick, wash your hands frequently, and clean frequently touched surfaces often. While there is no vaccine yet against coronavirus, there is one to protect against influenza, and we still recommend getting it if you have not done so.
Symptoms of the COVID-19 in people who have been exposed can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying.

For more information and updates related to COVID-19, visit the DPH website at https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph (https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph), where materials can be found in English, Simplified Chinese/Mandarin, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole. In addition to updates on the global coronavirus disease outbreak, the website also contains numbers of returning travelers that DPH is currently monitoring, which are updated twice each week on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The most accurate and timely information regarding this outbreak is available through the Division of Public Health, as well as the CDC’s website and social media channels (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

Visit de.gov/coronavirus (http://de.gov/coronavirus) for more information.

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The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.

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