

PRESS RELEASE

Franklin County Responds to Corona Virus Concerns

Currently NO confirmed cases in Franklin County

Franklin County, March 10, 2020: As more people become concerned about the corona virus, it is vitally important to ensure everyone has the most up-to-date, accurate and reliable information possible. The Franklin County Health Department, with our local Communicable Disease Professionals and our Epidemiology Team, have been working with State and Federal Officials to ensure everyone in Franklin County receives properly vetted, accurate and actionable regional and local information regarding the Corona Virus. For the most up to date information on the virus, please use the NCDHHS website: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>. Please note that there are currently NO confirmed cases of the Novel Corona Virus (that causes COVID-19) in Franklin County. The Franklin County Health Department will keep our residents apprised of the situation as soon as accurate, reliable and actionable information becomes available.

Increased Available Testing: As the Novel Corona Virus continues to spread, and with relaxed testing guidelines and increasing numbers of test kits available, there will be individuals today who now meet the criteria for testing, who just a week ago did not. That will increase the number of people being tested, which is welcome news. However, increased testing is just one part of our prevention efforts.

Time of Year: Given the time of year, there are many illnesses which are at their peak in late February and Early March in our area (i.e. Influenza, Strep etc.), whose symptoms mimic COVID-19. As a result, many individuals who are sick with a variety of other ailments (i.e. Flu) will now be able to “rule-out” corona virus given these new standards and increased testing capabilities. Given the modes of transmission for these other ailments are similar to the Novel Corona Virus, precautions already being used (given this time of year) will help protect you from these other ailments will also protect you from COVID-19.

When More Actionable information becomes available, we will get the word out: The Franklin County Health Department is in close contact with state and federal officials, our local hospital, Maria Parham Franklin, and all other Franklin County Healthcare providers, daycare centers schools and other governmental agencies, to keep everyone updated with the most current information regarding the virus' spread, and what we can do to protect ourselves. As soon as there is any

information available that the public, healthcare providers and/or other governmental agencies will need to enhance their own safety, we will get the information to you as soon as possible

Current Status: As of this afternoon, there are numerous people across our region being monitored and/or tested for this virus. At this point in time, we have NO confirmed cases of Novel Corona Virus or COVID-19 in Franklin County. IF there were individuals who presented with symptoms which indicated the need for testing, all healthcare providers are aware of the protocols to implement in order to protect their staff and the public (i.e. quarantine and isolation procedures) while they test and treat anyone suspected of having the virus. EMS staff and other first responders should already be practicing the same set of cleaning and personal protection measures designed to keep them safe from flu (given its peak flu season), and those same measures will keep them safe from the novel corona virus.

What Can You Do: Given the virus has been confirmed in Wake County, and will likely spread to surrounding counties at some point, everyone should practice personal protection measures to ensure you and your loved ones remain safe:

- avoid touching your face (including eyes, mouth, nose and ears);
- Wash your hands frequently & thoroughly (front & back) with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds AND if available, use hand sanitizers frequently;
- cough/sneeze into your elbow/arm, and avoid any physical contact greetings (i.e. no handshakes etc.);
- avoid others if you're sick;
- stay home from work/school and don't visit anyone (especially older adults & children and those with chronic conditions) if you're sick.
- If over the age of 60 and/or suffering from a chronic health condition, avoid large public gatherings (issued by CDC on 3-7-19);
- Avoid being closer than 6 feet (or 3 feet at a minimum) for longer than 10 minutes with anyone, especially those who may be ill.
- All agencies and businesses have been advised to practice their enhanced cleaning and personal protection protocols, as is normal practice for this time of year (given its peak flu season);

Bottom line: The virus has not reached Franklin County yet, but it will likely be here eventually. Prepare yourself by practicing the steps above and you can minimize the risk to your family and friends.

For additional information, please call the Franklin County Corona Virus COVID-19 Joint Information Center at 919-496-8113 or visit <https://www.franklincountync.us/services/health>.

Franklin County Government is committed to effective and innovative public services for all Franklin County citizens and businesses.