**FirstHealth of the Carolinas**

**News Release**

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**FirstHealth of the Carolinas Launches COVID-19 Prevalence Study in**

**Montgomery County**

PINEHURST—FirstHealth of the Carolinas is pleased to announce the launch of a COVID-19 prevalence study in Montgomery County, which will collect data to determine the scope and spread of the virus in the region.

The study will offer free COVID-19 antibody testing to residents in Montgomery County. Testing includes a blood draw, and the test is used to look for antibodies in the blood sample. When antibodies are found (a positive test result), it means that a person was infected with COVID-19 and their body’s immune system responded to the virus at some point in the past.

People develop antibodies when their body’s immune system responds to an infection. These antibodies can be found in the blood of people previously infected whether or not they had signs or symptoms of illness.

Led by FirstHealth infectious diseases physician Gretchen Arnoczy, M.D., data from the study will be analyzed to determine how widespread the virus is in our community and which populations have been most impacted.

According to Dr. Arnoczy, recent publications estimate an average of 40 to 50% of COVID-19 cases are mild or asymptomatic and go undetected in our communities. Antibody tests for COVID-19 have the potential to inform good public health decision making during the pandemic.

 “Like many areas of the country, central North Carolina has had limitations in testing availability, particularly in the early phase of the epidemic,” said Dr. Arnoczy. “As of mid-June, our current testing positivity rate for our system is approximately 10%. Our testing has included not only symptomatic people presenting to our clinics and hospitals but also asymptomatic people being evaluated during outbreak settings.”

Testing is completely free of charge for participants. You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Individuals who are interested in participating in the COVID-19 prevalence study should reside in Montgomery County and must enroll online at [www.firsthealth.org/COVIDstudy](http://www.firsthealth.org/COVIDstudy). Testing will be performed from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, July 25 at Montgomery Memorial Hospital, Medical Arts Center, 522 Allen Street, Suite 101, Troy. Participants will need to select a time slot online for an appointment.

Participants must complete a consent form prior to testing. All participants will be temperature screened prior to entering the building and must wear a mask. If you don’t have a mask, one will be provided for you. Only participants in the study will be allowed in the facility.

Participants are encouraged to enroll in FirstHealth’s secure online patient portal, MyChart, prior to getting tested. This will expedite the process and allow participants to access their results online within 24 to 72 hours. To register for FirstHealth MyChart, visit [www.firsthealthmychart.org](http://www.firsthealthmychart.org).

To learn more about FirstHealth’s COVID-19 prevalence study and to enroll, visit [www.firsthealth.org/COVIDstudy](http://www.firsthealth.org/COVIDstudy).