

Mar. 22, 2020

## INCREASED SAMPLE COLLECTION AND TESTING UNCOVERS COVID-19 CASES IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

*Continue Taking Measures To Prevent COVID-19 Transmission*



**Contact:**

Media Desk: 850-595-6500 x6000

**Pensacola, Fla. –** The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) has received notification of three (3) new positive cases of COVID-19 in Escambia County residents. Local efforts to test potentially-exposed individuals in Escambia County, Florida brings the number of Escambia County residents with a COVID-19 diagnosis to a total of four (4) individuals. This number is expected to change daily due to the return of results from ongoing testing. "These results reinforce how important it is for individuals to practice disease prevention methods and support the recent actions taken by state and local governments to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in Escambia County," said FDOH-Escambia Director, John J. Lanza, MD, PhD, MPH, FAAP, FHPS.

Health care providers in Escambia County, Florida are collaborating to make testing available to those for whom testing is indicated by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Contact tracing will be conducted for those individuals who have tested positive. Contact tracing is a frequently-used public health tool for tracking and preventing the spread of disease. Epidemiologists work to find everyone who has been in contact with the positive case. Persons identified to be at-risk through the contact tracing process are interviewed, evaluated, and educated on their risk factors and what they need to do next.

FDOH-Escambia encourages residents and visitors to take steps to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19. Everyone has an important role in preventing the spread of this virus.

### **Take Steps to Protect Against Spreading COVID-19**

Follow these steps in all situations, even when you feel perfectly healthy:

- Avoid close contact with others, such as hugging, kissing, or shaking hands;
- Avoid large gatherings (more than 10 people) and stay at least six (6) feet away from others;
- Avoid unnecessary travel, especially international travel and cruise travel;
- Avoid being around anyone who is sick or who may have a weak immune system;
- Move away from people before coughing or sneezing;
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue then throw it away;
- Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose;
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs.

If you are mildly ill, follow these tips to help prevent spreading it to other people:

- Do not go to the emergency department if you are only a little sick. The emergency department should be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill. The CDC has guidance on what to do if you are sick from a mild viral illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/treatment/takingcare.htm> and <https://www.cdc.gov/features/rhinoviruses/index.html>
- Stay at home while you are sick and keep children out of school or daycare while they are sick.

### **Screen Yourself and Call First**

If you become sick, review the screening criteria for COVID-19 testing:

- Are you experiencing symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
- Have you returned from international travel or been on a cruise within the last 14 days?
- Have you been around someone diagnosed with COVID-19? Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, call, do not visit, your health care provider and tell them about your symptoms and your travel history or exposure to a COVID-19 patient. It is important to call ahead before visiting your health care provider. Offices must take proper steps to avoid further spread of COVID-19 when a concerned patient arrives for a medical evaluation. If you do not have a health care provider or health insurance, call, do not visit, Community Health Northwest Florida at 850-436-4630 or other community walk-in care locations, and tell them about your symptoms and your travel history or exposure to a COVID-19 patient. They will determine if you meet the criteria for testing. Assistance with the steps outlined above may be obtained by calling our coronavirus information line at 850-595-6500, option 6.

### **Drive-through COVID-19 testing is available in Escambia County.**

Drive through testing will be available at two locations beginning on Monday, March 23, 2020.

- **IMPORTANT:** All patients are required to be screened before arriving at the drive-through testing centers by calling the local COVID-19 Screening Call Center at 850-746-2684.
- The screening call center is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. The call center staff will assist in helping find the testing center that best fits the needs of each person needing a COVID-19 test.
- The hours of operation for the drive-through testing centers for COVID-19 are 9 a.m to 1 p.m.

The Florida Department of Health (Department) works continuously with all our community partners to ensure that everyone is prepared in the eventuality of infectious disease spread. Please visit the Department's dedicated COVID-19 webpage at [www.FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19). The webpage 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](mailto:COVID-19@flhealth.gov). **The Call Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

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

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**About the Florida Department of Health**

The Florida Department of Health, 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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