

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Washington County, North Carolina
Coronavirus COVID-19 Response
General Press Release #4
March 31st, 2020 @ 12PM**

Previous press releases related to this matter are summarized below and are available online at:

<https://www.washconc.org/default.aspx> as well as the official Washington County Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/Washconc/> which also serves as Washington County's primary social media and online public communications platform. Joining or having a Facebook account is not required to access info at that site.

- March 16, 2020: Press Release #1 Announcing General COVID-19 Guidance and Response Measures
- March 18, 2020: Press Release #2 Announcing Declaration of Local State of Emergency for Washington County
- March 25, 2020: Press Release #3 Announcing Restricted Access to County Offices/ Suspension of Water Cutoffs

Washington County continues to remain in close and constant contact with our local, state, and federal health care and emergency response officials regarding our response to the threats posed by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

MTW Health Department issued separate press releases on Sunday March 29th and Monday, March 30th, concerning the first and second confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington County. The individuals in both cases which are not believed to be linked at this time are under self-isolation along with any known closely associated individuals. Health Department officials have and will continue to take appropriate follow up precautions in these and all future cases. The MTW press releases referenced above can be found at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/MTWHealth/>

With community spread of COVID-19 underway throughout North Carolina and our region, the recent development of local confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in Washington County has been expected and does not come as a surprise to local officials who have been preparing for this for some time. Additional cases are also likely to continue to develop and be announced in the coming days and weeks as increasing numbers of tests are administered locally, and as backlogged results are received.

Due to that expectation, in order to maximize the value of information communicated via official press releases, until further notice, the County will not continue to issue press releases for individual confirmed cases. Future press releases will instead attempt to summarize the most recent case numbers and statuses, and will focus primarily on continuing to deliver the most recent public information and guidance on preventative protective measures that can be taken personally and communally to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The most recent specific guidance that was previously provided in Press Release #3 remains in effect at this time. Previous press releases can be found at the links provided above.

Additionally, a statewide Stay at Home Order was signed by Governor Roy Cooper on March 27th, 2020 as Executive Order No. 121 which officially took effect at 5:00PM, March 30th, 2020 and remains in place for thirty (30) days unless otherwise modified. With limited exceptions, this order reduced the maximum number of persons permitted to gather at one time from fifty (50) to ten (10). It also provides that except in limited circumstances all citizens of North Carolina should remain at home and practice social distancing and other protective guidance while this order remains in place.

There are numerous exceptions to this general stay at home order. For more information please review the actual complete language of the order itself at: <https://governor.nc.gov/documents/executive-order-no-121>

Additional guidance related to this order can be found at:
https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/200327_FAQ-SAH-Order_FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0vYjU90ka9t8yUj8n1sIRkVXIWg50Efu7djPPYj5mS9tlpMj-lI9VhIHk

Links to both of these documents are also contained on our Official Washington County Facebook Page.

During these unusual and challenging circumstances we would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of remaining calm and preventing overreaction to, or the spread of, misinformation or information from unverified sources which can lead to panic and unnecessarily threaten public safety, lives, and property.

Please take time to intentionally educate yourself and others about where to find and how to practice the latest official and verified guidelines available from applicable local, state, and federal health care authorities (links to which are provided at the end of this press release).

Additional Information/Guidance: **COVID-19 Exposure and Symptoms**

Know the Symptoms

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness with [symptoms](#) similar to the flu. Symptoms are typically mild to moderate, but there have been cases of severe illness and death due to the virus. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Limit Exposure

Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often [spread](#) through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching and shaking hands) or through touching your nose, mouth or eyes before washing your hands. NCDHHS recommends that persons experiencing fever and cough should stay at home and not go out until their symptoms have completely resolved.

The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [actions you can take](#) to prevent others from getting sick. This includes:

- Avoiding contact with others.
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Not traveling or going to school or work while sick.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Call your healthcare provider for medical advice if you have COVID-19 symptoms, such as cough, fever or difficulty breathing.

Before you go to the doctor's office, emergency room or urgent care, **call ahead** and tell them about your symptoms and if you've been exposed to COVID-19. Be sure to follow instructions from your [local health department](#) and health care provider on the appropriate precaution measures to help protect your community. This will allow them to take steps to keep other people from getting exposed.

DHHS has [guidance](#) for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases who are being cared for at home and those who residing in a [congregate living facility](#), such as a dorm or barracks.

Steps to Take if You Are Sick

The CDC recommends the following steps if you are sick:

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor.
- Wear a facemask.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean your hands often.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day.
- Monitor your symptoms.

Visit the CDC website for more [details](#). View NCDHHS' [guidance](#) on what to do if you feel sick.

(See the attached 1 page flier from the NC DHHS referred to as “guidance” above which can also be found online at: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/C19-PatientGuidance-3.23.20-FINAL--003-.pdf>)

Know the Difference: Self-monitor, Quarantine and Isolation

These are protective measures used to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people who may have been exposed.

- **Self-monitoring** is for those that may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19. They should monitor themselves for symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath). Self-monitoring means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they develop symptoms during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek medical advice by telephone.
- **Quarantine** is for people who were exposed to a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 but are not experiencing symptoms. Contact your [local health department](#) or medical provider if you are unsure if you should self-quarantine.
- **Isolation** separates people who are sick from those who are well. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 in North Carolina are in isolation.

Testing

The CDC and NCDHHS have shifted their focus away from mass testing.

As such, current testing guidelines are as follows:

- Most people do not need a test. When you leave your home to get tested, you could expose yourself to COVID-19 if you do not already have it. If you do have COVID-19, you can give it to someone else, including people who are high risk.
- Your doctor can help you decide if you need a test. There is no treatment for COVID-19. For people with mild symptoms who don't need medical care, getting a test will not change what you or your doctor do.
- Testing is most important for people who are seriously ill, in the hospital, people in high-risk settings like nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and healthcare workers and other first responders who are caring for those with COVID-19.

Additional Resources:

1. Local Resources:

- a. MTW District Health Department <https://mtwdistricthealth.org/>
- b. Washington County Web Page <https://www.washconc.org/> (contains info on most services/departments)
- c. Washington County Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/Washconc/>
- d. Washington Regional Medical Center (Privately Owned & Operated)
https://www.facebook.com/pg/washingtonregionalmedicalcenter/posts/?ref=page_internal

2. State Resources/Guidance:

- a. NC Dept. of Health & Human Services: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>
- b. NC Governor Cooper's Executive Orders: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina/executive-orders>
- c. NC Dept of Commerce/Unemployment Insurance: <https://des.nc.gov/need-help/covid-19-information>
- d. Golden Leaf Foundation: <https://www.goldenleaf.org/covid-19/>

3. Federal Resources/Guidance:

- a. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- b. US Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

End of Press Release