



Clay B. Stamp
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Talbot County Prepares for COVID-19

Easton, Maryland (February 28, 2020) – A novel coronavirus was identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has since spread to 31 countries including the United States. As of February 27, 2020, there were 60 cases in the United States; all but one of those cases were related to international travel. Although the virus has been detected in the United States, it is not spreading widely throughout the community. There have been no cases in Maryland. The new coronavirus is named SARS-CoV-2 and produces a respiratory illness named COVID-19.

What You Need To Know

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses common in many different species. There are many strains of coronavirus which affect humans, some of which cause mild illness such as the “common cold” and others cause more severe illness, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that had not caused illness in humans before December 2019.
- The virus spreads from person to person in respiratory droplets (in coughs, sneezes, or regular breathing or talking), so close contact of six feet or less increases the risk of transmitting the infection.
- Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.
- Currently, individuals at risk of infection are people who:
 - Have recently traveled to China
 - Have close, personal contact with those recent travelers
 - Have close, personal contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
- The severity of illness can range from mild to severe respiratory difficulty and even death; some individuals may experience no symptoms. Most people recover from the infections, with close to 80% of those infected experiencing mild or moderate symptoms. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- Elderly individuals and people with chronic illnesses have greater risk for severe illness. Examples of such chronic illnesses include cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and conditions impacting the immune system’s ability to fight germs.
- Current treatment for the disease, when needed, is supportive care to relieve symptoms. A subset of cases may need to be hospitalized.
- There is a push for rapid vaccine development but no vaccine is available at this time. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure to the virus by taking everyday preventive precautions.



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What You Can Do

The same precautions against the flu work for the coronavirus:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid crowds when the virus is known to be spreading.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, or cough into your bent arm.
- Soiled tissues can transmit the flu or this virus, so dispose of the tissues in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces and objects in your home and at work.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

What is being done to be prepared at the federal and state level?

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Maryland Department of Health (MDH) are sending out updates daily and making preparations for controlling the spread of the virus.
- All hospitals and healthcare providers are being educated about the disease and reminded of the precautions needed.
- A test for the virus will hopefully be available to all state laboratories soon. At this time the CDC is doing most of the testing.

What We Are Doing In Talbot County

Talbot County Department of Emergency Services and the Talbot County Health Department are being briefed and updated daily from state and federal partners as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We are together reviewing our plans, staffing needs, and supplies on a regular basis, as well as planning for future supply and equipment needs. The Health Department is in constant contact with hospitals and local providers and Emergency Services has implemented protocols to assess 911 callers and patients we come in contact with. We are, as always, making sure our staff and community are practicing good hygiene and safe handling of sick patients.

Talbot County Health Officer, Dr. Fredia Wadley states, “While we should be concerned about a new virus spreading in the United States, we should also recognize that a lot of things are being planned to deal with any spread that may occur. There is no reason to panic and every reason to use common sense about how to protect yourself from any virus whether influenza or coronavirus.”

“Talbot County utilizes its close partnerships amongst agencies on a daily basis to make sure that residents are safe and aware of what is happening around us. We will continue to collect information as it pertains to this virus and make sure our agencies and residents are informed and prepared. A prepared community is a safe community,” says Clay Stamp, Assistant County Manager and Director of Emergency Services.



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Where to Find More Information

- **CDC COVID-2019 Website:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **Maryland Department of Health Website:** <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>
- **Talbot County Health Department Website:** <https://health.maryland.gov/talbotcounty/Pages/home.aspx>
- **Talbot County Health Department Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TalbotHealthMaryland/>
- **Talbot County Department of Emergency Services Website:** <http://www.talbotdes.org/default.asp>
- **Talbot County Department of Emergency Services Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/talbotdes>

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