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Westfield Regional Health Department
COVID-19 Update

March 11, 2020

WHAT THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT IS DOING?

The Westfield Regional Health Department (WRHD) has been and will continue to actively monitor the evolving situation involving COVID-19 in New Jersey. In addition, we are reviewing and sharing the guidance that is being provided by the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The WRHD has taken some additional internal preparedness actions that include:

- Participating in NJDOH and CDC information and guidance conference calls and webinars
- Maintaining daily contact with State Epidemiologists on the changing situation
- Conducting collaborative meetings with the other public health agencies from the surrounding area
- Reviewing applicable emergency plans and procedures, including the Department's Pandemic Plan
- Communicating with local schools and health care providers to provide updated guidance

In addition, due to the recent COVID-19 activity in long term care facilities (LTCF) in other states, we have been in contact with our LTCF to ensure that they are prepared if we start to see an increase in cases in New Jersey.

Please be assured that if and when this situation rises to the level that warrants additional proactive preparedness, response or mitigation actions, the WRHD will act in accordance with our plans and take the appropriate actions.

At this time, there have been 23 presumptive cases of COVID-19 identified in New Jersey, and one death reported. However, we are still seeing many cases of influenza as well as other respiratory illnesses.

WHAT ABOUT THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY AND PANDEMIC DECLARATION?

On March 9, 2020 Governor Murphy declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This allows state agencies and departments to utilize state resources to assist affected communities responding to and recovering from COVID-19 cases. Additionally, the declaration triggers other executive powers and safeguards, such as prohibiting excessive price increases pursuant to New Jersey's Consumer Fraud Act and the ability to waive certain procurement procedures to expedite the delivery of goods and services necessary for coronavirus preparedness and response efforts. Governor Murphy's emergency declaration also empowers all State agencies, specifically the Departments of Banking and Insurance, Health, Human Services, and the Civil Service Commission to take all appropriate steps to address the public health hazard of COVID-19.

Additionally, on March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. A pandemic is a disease that has become widespread around the world. The declaration is just a characterization of the activity we have been seeing worldwide.

WHAT CAN THE PUBLIC DO?

As with all illnesses, it is important to take steps to prevent the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve while coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands frequently

- Avoid touching your face
- Stay home if you are sick
- If using hand sanitizer, ensure it contains at least 60% alcohol

If you are sick and have symptoms such as a cough and fever, it is recommended that you stay at home and do not attend public gatherings or go to work/school. If you are not sick you should still practice good hand hygene and avoid sick people.

If you are at increased risk for COVID-19 complications due to your age or a severe underlying medical condtion, it is especially important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of exposure. You should also talk to your health care provider ahead of time to have a plan in place in the event you become sick.

We encourage residents to call the NJ COVID-19 Hotline at 1-800-222-1222 if they have general questions about novel coronavirus. The hotline is open 24/7 and has multi-language capacity. Callers who need medical advise should contact their health care provider.

It is important to have factual up to date information on novel coronavirus. Be certain to get information from trusted and credible sources, such as the CDC, NJDOH, your local health department and the call center.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are providing live updates to their page which can be found at cdc.gov/coronavirus.

New Jersey specific information can also be found at https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml

Additional information can also be found at the Westfield Regional Health Department's webpage at www.westfieldnj.gov/health

Providing Public Health and Environmental Services to Chatham Borough, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, New Providence, Roselle Park, Summit and Westfield