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PRESS RELEASE
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Fourth Person in New Hampshire is Being Tested for COVID-19 *~~Individual developed symptoms after travel to Italy~~*

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has announced a fourth person in New Hampshire who is being tested for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The illness caused by the new coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province China, and has since spread to at least 50 other countries, including the U.S. The person recently returned from travel to Italy and notified their healthcare provider after developing fever and respiratory symptoms within 14 days of travel. They are currently isolated and being monitored by public health clinicians and do not currently pose a threat to the public's health. Preliminary COVID-19 test results are expected possibly as early as tomorrow. There have not been any cases of COVID-19 yet identified in New Hampshire.

“We have heard concerns from communities about returning travelers from countries outside of China that are currently experiencing widespread transmission of COVID-19, such as Italy” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan. “Any returning travelers from countries that currently have a CDC travel advisory due to sustained or widespread COVID-19 transmission should monitor their health closely for development of fever or respiratory symptoms. If such symptoms develop within 14 days of travel to an affected country, the individual should seek health advice by phone from their healthcare provider and limit their contact with others. There is not currently a recommendation that individuals who have traveled to countries other than China should self-quarantine, but given the rapidly changing epidemic, these recommendations could change as the CDC adapts their response and traveler monitoring procedures. We are aware that some schools have students who traveled to Italy over February break and have instructed their students to stay home for 14 days from travel to affected regions. We will support schools in taking steps to protect their communities during this very dynamic and challenging situation, and we have released interim guidance to help school communities to address questions and concerns.”

Guidance to schools can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/2019-coronavirus-schools-02292020.pdf>

Instructions for returning travelers to self-observe for symptoms of COVID-19 are available here: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/2019-coronavirus-self-observation-guidelines.pdf>

DHHS has additionally worked to develop COVID-19 testing capabilities in the New Hampshire Public Health Laboratories (PHL) and has expedited the implementation process to ensure the State has the capacity to perform the test. Previously, all testing for COVID-19 was conducted by the CDC. We anticipate our PHL having testing capacity for COVID-19 by Monday March 2nd. The CDC is still conducting confirmatory tests on any presumptive positive test results to confirm states' findings.

“We have asked all healthcare providers to screen patients presenting to healthcare facilities with fever or respiratory symptoms to determine whether those patients’ have traveled to countries identified with sustained community transmission of COVID-19 so that we can rapidly identify, isolate, and test patients with suspect COVID-19,” continued Dr. Chan. “As we implement the COVID-19 test at our Public Health Laboratories this week, and given the global expansion of the COVID-19 epidemic, we expect more testing to take place in the coming weeks as we work to identify infections and prevent spread in our communities.”

The U.S. expects to detect more introductions of COVID-19 through travel, as well as more person-to-person spread and community transmission of this virus. The CDC and New Hampshire are conducting aggressive containment efforts, including ongoing use of isolation and quarantine measures to decrease introductions and spread of the virus.

Because COVID-19, and all respiratory illnesses, are most commonly spread through respiratory droplets, residents should take the same precautions as those recommended to prevent the spread of influenza:

- Stay home and avoid public places when sick (i.e. social distancing)
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid being within 6 feet (close contact) of a person who is sick
- Avoid sharing drinks, smoking/vaping devices, or other utensils or objects that may transmit saliva
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces

There is sustained and widespread transmission of COVID-19 in several countries. The CDC has currently issued travel advisories for the following countries, but given the rapidly changing situation, these advisories are frequently changing:

- Level 3 Travel Warning (avoid all nonessential travel due to widespread community transmission): China, Iran, Italy and South Korea
- Level 2 Travel Alert (practice enhanced precautions due to sustained community transmission): Japan
- Level 1 Travel Watch (practice usual precautions but limited community spread has been reported): Hong Kong

For more information on COVID-19, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>. For the latest information from the CDC, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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