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Westfield Regional Health Department COVID-19 Update March 25, 2020

RECENT UPDATES:

- The number of cases of COVID-19 is rising quickly and ongoing spread is being seen in New Jersey.
- Those who are most likely to develop serious illness from COVID-19 include:
 - Those who are 65 and older
 - Nursing home or long term care facility residents
 - People of any age that have heart disease, diabetes, or lung disease, especially if these conditions are uncontrolled.
- A self-assessment tool from the NJ Department of Health can be found at <https://self.covid19.nj.gov/>
- Union County has opened a drive through testing site at Kean University. The testing site is open by appointment only and your health care provider must pre-register you and provide a prescription for testing. More information can be found at: <https://ucnj.org/coronavirus-update/county-of-union-to-open-states-first-county-run-drive-through-testing-center-for-covid-19-at-kean-university-on-monday/>
- 211 is now also serving as a public COVID-19 call center
- Residents can text NJCOVID to 898-211 to stay informed via text messaging
- For an update of cases by county, there is now a dashboard available at https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml

- The NJ Department of Human Services operates a toll free “warm line” which is a resource for people seeking mental health service. The warm line is available 24 hours and has operators in multiple languages. The number is (877) 294-HELP (4357).
- If you feel as though you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19, please call before going to your health care provider.

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 CDC.

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

- Interviewing all confirmed positives and following up on case investigations
- 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.

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.

New Jersey has also implemented the following:

- All bars, restaurants, gyms, movie theaters, and casinos in New Jersey were ordered to close at 8pm Monday, March 16, 2020 and will remain closed until further notice to protect against COVID-19. Restaurants and bars will be permitted to offer takeout and delivery. Supermarkets and pharmacies will remain open.
- All NJ schools, both public and private, are to close on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.
- Governor Murphy has announced that NJ is strongly discouraging residents from making non-essential travel between 8pm-5am.

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING:

Now is the time to stay home as much as possible, avoid crowds and keep 6-10 feet apart from other people if you have to go out. All non-essential travel and outings should be postponed.

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 hygiene and avoid sick people.

If you are at increased risk for COVID-19 complications due to your age or a severe underlying medical condition, 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 advice 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](https://www.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**