

Friday, March 6, 2020 – 4:00 pm

In the last several days, we have seen a significant increase in the number of states reporting positive COVID-19 cases and the overall number of cases. Both the number of cases and the states reporting cases are expected to continue to rise. Both Maryland and North Carolina have now reported cases. As of 11am March 6<sup>th</sup>, there are NO positive cases reported in Virginia. However, at some point, the reality of the situation is that we are likely going to see at least 1 positive case in Virginia. The primary goal for all of us should be help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible; principally, by promoting good hand hygiene, cough etiquette and social distancing. The more limited (and slower) the spread of COVID-19, the better the systems we all have in place will be at adjusting to virus and its impacts. Also, to keep things in perspective, as of yesterday, 9,354 individuals had tested positive for flu in VA and 782 deaths had been reported during the 2019-20 flu season.

Now is the time for employers, businesses, schools and individuals to review/develop Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) and personal preparedness plans to prepare for the potential of increased absenteeism, potential isolated closures/quarantines and other disruptions caused by the virus. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WIDESPREAD IMPACTS IN OUR AREA ARE GOING TO OCCUR, just that it is better to begin to prepare now in case they do occur.

There are several helpful links listed at the bottom of this email and additional information is available from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). I've also attached copies of several posters you may want to utilize in your public information efforts.

Current advice on the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is exactly the same advice to prevent the spread of colds and flu. **Practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers regularly. Those that develop a cough or a sneeze should do so into a tissue or the inside of their elbow, washing their hands afterwards.**

Note: due rapidly changing situation and the timing of the different agencies cutoff periods for their data reporting, you may be noticing different numbers depending on the source that you are monitoring related to the number of cases and deaths attributed to COVID-19. For these updates, I have chosen to reference the information from VDH, CDC and the World Health Organization recognizing them as highly reliable sources of information. If other sources are utilized, I'll reference the source along with rationale for including it in the summary.

- The situation continues to be rapidly evolving. VDH has setup a web page specifically for coronavirus – [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus). This site is updated daily between 10-11am with information about the situation in Virginia as well as having direct links to CDC information.
- As of 3/5/20 the World Health Organization (WHO) is reporting 95,333 confirmed cases worldwide. 86 countries are now reporting confirmed cases, with the majority still found in China. The WHO's risk assessment at the global level is Very High.
- As of March 4<sup>th</sup>, the CDS is reporting 164 cases (confirmed and detected in the US ) of COVID-19 and 11 deaths, with the known cases being found in 17 states. Additionally, there are 49 cases confirmed in persons repatriated to the US (e.g. evacuated from China (3) or the Diamond

Princes Cruise Ship (46)). (Note: as of 3pm March 5th, Johns Hopkins Center for Systems Science and Engineering is reporting 259 confirmed cases and 14 deaths in the US.)

- It is expected that additional cases will be identified in the coming days. The CDC risk assessment to the US general public continues to be low. However, it is important to note that the current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus is able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way. If this proves true in the US as well, the risk assessment will likely be different.
- No cases of COVID-19 have been identified in VA at this time. In VA, 31 individuals have been tested for COVID-19. 21 tested negative for the virus and 10 cases are pending test results.
- In VA, 120 travelers are under Public Health Monitoring. At this time, Public Health deems 13 to be at low risk and 107 to be at medium risk for COVID-19. It is important to note that these individuals are not currently suspected of having COVID-19, they are just being monitored closer than the general public because they have travelled from China or other countries that represent higher risk factors.
- As mentioned before, It's important to note that we are still in flu season – flu is currently considered widespread in VA. As of the March 5th VDH Weekly Influenza report, 9,354 case of flu had been reported in VA this flu season and VDH had received 782 pneumonia and flu related death reports. The VDH recommends everyone take 3 actions to prevent further spread of influenza:
  - Get vaccinated every year – if you haven't already gotten your flu shot this year, it is not too late.
  - **Practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers regularly. Those that develop a cough or a sneeze should do so into a tissue or the inside of their elbow, washing their hands afterwards.**
  - Take antivirals as prescribed by your healthcare provider if you do become sick.
- While they are still learning how COVID-19 is transmitted, it is likely that it will also be determined to be transmitted through coughing, sneezing or close personal contact just like the flu. Again, good hand hygiene and cough etiquette is likely a good way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Helpful links on Coronavirus:
  - CDC – fact sheet – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>
  - CDC interim guidance for businesses and employers to plan/respond to COVID-19 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>
  - VHD guidance for k-12 schools - [http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2020/02/VDH-2019-n-CoV-K-12-Guidance\\_FINAL\\_02042020.pdf](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2020/02/VDH-2019-n-CoV-K-12-Guidance_FINAL_02042020.pdf)
  - Get Your Family Ready for Pandemic Flu - <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-ind-house.pdf>

Moving forward, my plan is to provide a weekly update unless circumstances warrant a more frequent update. The VDH webpage [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus) is the best source for up-to-date information.

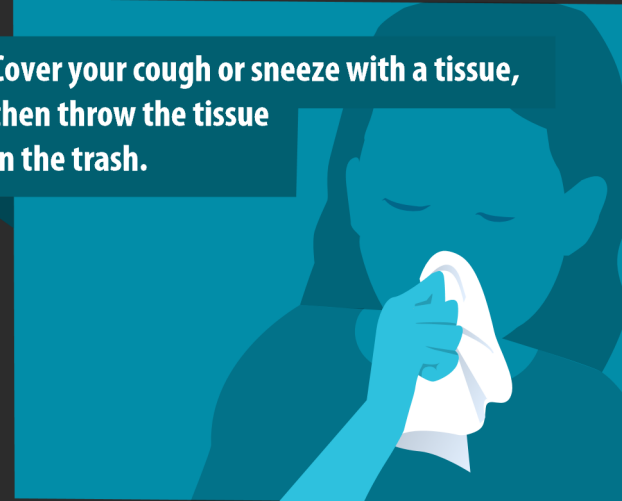
# STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

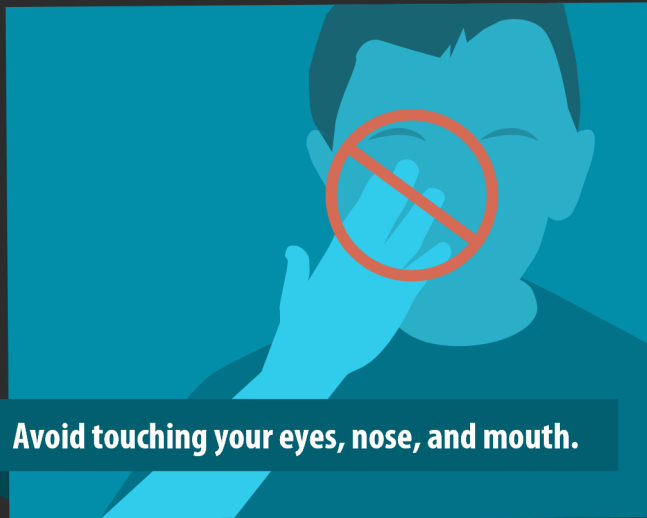
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



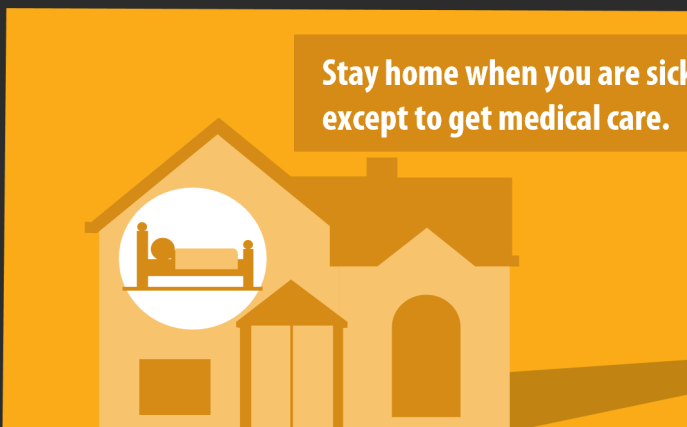
Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



