

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ventura County Public Health Press Release

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Ventura County Public Health Provides Guidance on COVID-19 Testing

Please save tests for those in critical need

Ventura, CA – The Ventura County Public Health Department today announced increased efforts in the County’s response to COVID-19. “We anticipate more cases and increased community spread as more cases are reported in neighboring counties and throughout the state,” said Ventura County Public Health Officer, Doctor Robert Levin. “Please do not call 911 to request testing for COVID-19 and please do not go to our emergency rooms unless you are seriously ill and require emergency care. If you have respiratory illness and want to know if you should be tested for COVID-19, it is best to call your health care provider or, if you don’t have a provider, call 2-1-1 for help finding a clinician near you. Our healthcare providers are prepared to see more cases, but we must all do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 in order to minimize strain on our healthcare system and other service providers,” he added.

The Ventura County Public Health Department is urging community members to save critical care and testing to those that are most in need of medical attention. Testing is not helpful if you do not have symptoms. However, most people will get better with rest so there is no need to see a doctor if you have mild symptoms. There is currently 1 confirmed case of COVID-19 and 3 presumptive positive cases in Ventura County. All patients are under home quarantine.

If you develop difficulty breathing or cannot keep fluids down, see a doctor or call 911. Certain patients such as the elderly, those that are immune compromised or have underlying medical conditions should call their doctor earlier. If you have mild symptoms, there may be no need to go to a medical facility to see a doctor. If you have questions, please call the clinic or your doctor before going in. If your primary care provider cannot provide testing when recommended they can refer you to an urgent care that will be equipped for testing. Some facilities are offering drive-by testing when it is recommended to help prevent possible exposure.

“Our public health lab is serving as a critical resource for our local hospital and emergency rooms. Our lab was one of the first of 11 county labs in the state to be certified to perform testing locally. Prior to that, testing had to be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the turnaround time was 5 to 7 days. Now, we are able to get same-day test results on hospital patients. These patients are already high risk and vulnerable. This is incredibly valuable, as these patients are within the walls of the hospital, requiring large amounts of resources in terms of both staff and personal protective equipment. Knowing the results of a test in rapid time provides the ability to either clear them from isolation, when negative, or double down on our efforts to protect our staff from exposure, when positive,” said Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Paula Hospital Medical Director, Doctor Todd Flosi. “This rapid turnaround time is helping us protect our staff from

potential quarantine and preserving our ability to respond to a possible significant surge in very sick patients that will require our hospitals to be fully staffed and functional.”

This turnaround time is critical for those who are most in need. If private and public labs are inundated with processing test results in cases where it is not recommended that alone could delay results for those that are critical. It is important that our community members understand that testing capacity should be focused on those that are high risk and have symptoms. The main symptom of this disease is a fever. Community members are urged to take their temperature if they feel symptomatic and contact their health care provider with the information about their fever in advance of visiting a facility.

“The people in our lives who are most at risk, seniors and those with underlying health conditions, are depending on our community members to make the right choice to social distance and prevent the spread of disease. By working together, we can help limit the spread of this disease,” said Doctor Robert Levin. “Our community is urged to follow the guidelines issued by Governor Newsom. People 65 or older are encouraged to stay home and all community members are encouraged to implement social distancing plans by limiting outings and staying home as much as possible,” he added.

HOTLINE/COMMUNICATION

The County of Ventura is finalizing a 2-1-1 COVID-19 hotline for community members to have questions answered. 2-1-1 is already available for questions about community resources but this new feature will provide 24/7 staff answering questions about COVID-19. It will be launched on Wednesday, March 18. A physician’s hotline is also being created. County of Ventura Doctors will be available 24/7 to speak to physicians who have questions. This hotline will also launch on March 18.

“During this time of increased uncertainty, we respect and understand the concerns of the community. We are listening to those concerns and we will continue to engage with the communities we serve. We will continue to mobilize county resources, coordinate with agencies and partners and raise awareness about how we can all work together to take action, support one another and be prepared,” said County of Ventura CEO, Mike Powers. “We appreciate the response of our medical professionals and all frontline staff, like social workers and nurses, in responding to the needs of our community members, especially the most vulnerable and high risk, during this time of emergency.”

The County has launched a Facebook Group called “Ventura County Coronavirus News Group Official” where residents can have questions answered. The page was launched on March 14 and has more than 17,000 members. Ventura County Doctors and other subject matter experts are answering questions and providing up to date information on the site. In addition to this, the County of Ventura has launched a Spanish only Facebook page and Spanish only Coronavirus Group to provide critical information to the Spanish speaking population in our County. Community members can join the County on the Spanish platforms at “Grupo Informativo de Coronavirus del Condado de Ventura – OFICIAL” and “Condado de Ventura Espanol”. Information regarding resources, closures, preparedness and overall guidance continues to be provided on www.vcemergency.com in Spanish and English and information is being distributed to groups throughout the County including printed materials at school site meal distribution sites.

Public Health has issued the following guidance during this time of increased spread throughout the Country:

- If you feel sick, stay home. Do not go to work.
 - Avoid non-essential travel and public gatherings.
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- If someone in your household is sick, keep them home. Do not send them to a friend, relatives or childcare provider. Keep the entire household home. Do not go to work.
- If you are 65 or older, stay home and away from other people.
- If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.
- Even if you are young, or otherwise healthy, you are at risk and your activities can increase the risk for others. It is crucial that you do your part to stop the spread of COVID-19. Please stay home as much as possible. Avoid social gatherings. Avoid discretionary travel and social visits. Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.
- If you are mildly sick with a fever, stay home and call your doctor if you are concerned and/or your symptoms worsen. Individuals who are elderly, have underlying health conditions or pregnant should consider contacting their providers earlier when they are sick.
- Exclude employees and visitors with any fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms and visitors with recent travel to any country or region with significant community transmission (including communities in the US) from all businesses and gatherings of any size.

Practice good hygiene:

- Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.

The California Department of Public Health has state guidance on how to prepare and protect community members from COVID-19 at the following [link](#). Also, found at www.cdph.ca.gov.
