



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 18, 2020

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Prioritize COVID-19 Tests for Most Vulnerable, First Responders, Health Workers

ATLANTA – After conversations with hospital and healthcare facility officials, and as COVID-19 continues to spread around the globe and throughout communities in Georgia, Governor Brian P. Kemp, the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) issued the following joint statement:

"Many Georgians are eager to be tested right now, but we need to be mindful of our resources. We have to be in this fight together.

"According to federal and state health officials, we must start prioritizing COVID-19 tests for our most vulnerable populations and the people responsible for their care and safety. This will conserve precious medical supplies - like masks, shoe covers and gowns - which are becoming increasingly difficult to find for healthcare facilities due to overuse, export bans and hoarding.

"Georgia's elderly, those with chronic, underlying health conditions, those who live in a long-term care facility like an assisted living facility or nursing home, and those serving on the front lines as a healthcare worker, first responder, long-term care facility staffer, or law enforcement need tests. The best way to serve the public is to protect the people who are protecting us in this battle.

"It is our responsibility to keep the elderly and chronically ill safe, back our law enforcement and first responders, and protect the doctors, nurses, and healthcare providers working around the clock. We ask everyone to continue to pray for our nation in the weeks ahead."

According to federal and state health officials, people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 do not need to be tested. Additionally, most people who are mildly or moderately ill with "cold-like" symptoms do not need to be tested. The majority of people with COVID-19 can safely recover at home with self-isolation and symptomatic treatment. Diagnosis through laboratory testing does not change the care that they would receive. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 and should always consult their healthcare provider if they are sick.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued revised guidance on COVID-19 recovery. The most important step in containing COVID-19 is that people who are sick with mild respiratory symptoms – fever and cough – should stay home and isolate themselves from others for at least seven days after their symptoms began or 72 hours after

their fever has resolved and symptoms have improved. If you have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19, you must self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

Correctly washing your hands and maintaining social distance by avoiding large gatherings and close contact with people who are sick are two of the easiest ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

All Georgians play a critical role in helping to slow the spread of COVID-19 by adhering to the following guidance:

- Practice social distancing by putting at least 6 feet between yourself and other people.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

For updates on the COVID-19 situation as it develops, follow @GaDPH, @GeorgiaEMA, and @GovKemp on Twitter and @GaDPH, @GEMA.OHS, and @GovKemp on Facebook.

For information about COVID-19, visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus> or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Governor Kemp and DPH Commissioner Toomey will hold a media briefing tomorrow, March 19, 2020, at 4 p.m. at the Georgia State Capitol on the North Wing Stairs. Reporters will be required to stand at least 6 feet away from the Governor in the Rotunda.

To RSVP for this event, email tate.mitchell@georgia.gov by 10 a.m. tomorrow. Attendance will be limited to one reporter and one camera person per outlet. Media will be screened and must be cleared before they can enter the building.

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