

## COVID-19 FAQs: Updated 3.16.20

### Confirmed Cases

**Q: Do we have any cases here?**

A: If/when we get a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, we will let the public know. The Georgia Department of Public Health updates its website, [dph.ga.gov](http://dph.ga.gov), every day at noon with a map of lab-confirmed cases around the state of Georgia.

**Q: What happens when we start getting cases?**

A: Even if you are in a county with no confirmed case, don't assume the virus is not present. Because testing has been limited, we may not have an accurate picture of the current level of infection across our area. That's why we must all take measures to protect ourselves and others from spreading germs.

That means:

- Washing hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water. If you don't have soap, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Regularly clean common surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops, computer keyboards, and light switches.
- Cover your cough with a tissue and throw the tissue away or cough into the crook of your elbow.
- Instead of shaking hands, consider a fist or elbow bump.
- Don't share cups or eating utensils.



Serving Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn,  
Liberty, Long, and McIntosh counties.

## Testing

### **Q: Can I get tested for COVID-19 at the health department?**

A: No. Local health departments cannot evaluate, test, or treat COVID-19.

### **Q: Who can get tested and where?**

A: Right now, all tests for COVID-19 must be ordered by a physician. Federal and state agencies are working to expand access to testing, but currently testing supplies and laboratories are limited. That's why testing must be prioritized. Not everyone should get tested. Clinicians use certain criteria to determine if testing is warranted. Priorities for testing include:

- Hospitalized patients who have signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19
- Other symptomatic individuals such as older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions or are immunocompromised
- Any persons who, within 14 days of showing symptoms, had close contact with a suspect or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient, or who have a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of their symptom onset.
- Healthcare professionals who care for patients with COVID-19

### **Q: What if I have symptoms or think I have COVID-19 but don't fall into a priority testing category?**

A: We are still in flu and allergy season and several symptoms of COVID-19 are similar. If you have symptoms including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, then you should stay home and away from others. You shouldn't go outside your home except to get medical care but – and this is important – don't seek medical care without calling the healthcare provider first. That will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed. If you have symptoms:

- Stay in a specific room of the house and use a separate bathroom from others if you can.

- Don't share personal items such as dishes, eating utensils, or bedding with others in your home and thoroughly wash those items with soap and water after they've been used.
- Use household cleaners to clean high-touch surfaces and areas – some examples include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, phones, and keyboards.
- While we don't recommend facemasks for everyone, people who are sick should wear one when around other people. If the person who is sick can't wear a facemask because, say, they have trouble breathing, then anyone who is in the room with the sick person should wear a facemask.
- And of course, the same basic hygiene recommendations still apply: Wash your hands, sneeze or cough into a tissue and throw the tissue away, regularly clean common surfaces in the home, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Keep in mind that there is no treatment for COVID-19 and people who are mildly ill may be able to isolate and care for themselves at home. Even with severe cases, the absence of a test does not delay treatment. Doctors can provide supportive care to ease symptoms, and this is done with or without a test.

**Q: How many people are being tested?**

A: We don't know how many people are being tested. Commercial laboratories are not required to report the number of tests they've ordered; however, they **MUST** report any positive tests to public health.

**Q: How will we know if people in our area are positive for COVID-19?**

A: Laboratories must report positive tests to public health. If/when we are notified that we have lab-confirmed positive cases, we will let the public know through our website (GaCHD.org), media partners, social media outlets, communications through other community partners such as Emergency Management Agencies.

**Q: Are there home testing kits available?**

A: No. We understand people are concerned and that many individuals would like to be tested. Right now, the only way to get tested is for a physician to order the test. But again, if you have mild symptoms you should isolate yourself from others in your household and care for yourself at home. If your symptoms become worse, call a healthcare provider.

## Social Distancing

**Q: What is social distancing?**

A: Social distancing means minimizing contact with people. It also means that if you are near someone in public, try to stay at least 6 feet away. The less contact people have with one another means the less opportunity for the virus to spread. Slowing the spread of the virus means we can keep our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed.

## Precautions

**Q: Should I wear a facemask?**

A: If you are sick, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

## Event Cancellations

**Q: Should I go to church/party/community gathering/bar?**

A: Right now, federal and state guidelines recommend staying home if possible and limiting time in public places as precautions associated with social distancing. The more we use social distancing techniques, the more we reduce the risk of the virus spreading. This is especially important for older people and those with underlying health conditions who are most vulnerable to the virus.

## State of Georgia Hotline

There is a state of Georgia hotline people can call with questions or if they think they may have been exposed: 1-844-442-2681

Again, if you believe you're experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to the novel coronavirus, please contact your primary care doctor, an urgent care clinic, or your local federally qualified healthcare center. Please do not show up to an emergency room or healthcare facility unannounced.

**Providers: Healthcare providers who suspect COVID-19 in a patient should immediately contact the Georgia Department of Public Health by calling 1-866- PUB-HLTH (782-4584).**