

Health Director Update COVID-19 Prevention and Preparedness Plan

(WELLNESS LABS, TULSA, Oklahoma)— There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Oklahoma as of the release of this statement.

“I want to be clear that the threat of Coronavirus in Oklahoma and the United States remains low,” says Laboratory Technical Director, Dr. Tiffany Montgomery, “but this could change, and we have to be prepared. I believe it is imperative that we are open with the public and are communicating information in real-time about the Coronavirus to both inform and educate our communities. We will communicate what we know, when we know it.”

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus strain that has only spread in people since December 2019. This disease is believed to be originated in bats and is zoonotic. That means it can be transferred between both human and non-human species such as dogs and cats as well. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to consider the health risk from COVID-19 to be low among the general public in the U.S. However, COVID-19 continues to be an issue of concern internationally and there is potential for an eventual community person-to-person spread to occur in this country.

“Since the start of this outbreak, we’ve taken a proactive approach to prepare and carefully monitor potential cases and travelers about COVID-19 in Tulsa, OK,” said Dr. Montgomery. “As the CDC advised, we need to be prepared for community spread of COVID-19. We are working to make sure our healthcare partners, first responders, state agencies, and local health departments have the resources they need to respond.”

Today Wellness Labs has recommended the following action by our clinical lab and patient facilities we serve:

- The health care facilities should post information from the Department of Health or CDC in all rest areas on hand washing protocols.
- The facilities should increase frequency and use of disinfectant measures in all their state facilities to protect patients, families, and staff.
- All facilities, patients, and staff should get or have the annual flu and pneumococcal vaccine.
- Restrict travel to nations where the CDC has recommended no travel, such as China and South Korea.
- The Medical Director is asking the Nursing homes to continue working with local aging networks to identify the most vulnerable older adults with the highest needs to make sure that plans are in place to meet their needs - whether that is providing additional meals or additional medication or other personal care needs.
- The Governor is asking local aging advocates across Oklahoma to go out into their communities to check on nursing care facilities to ensure that all illness prevention methods are in place. If you need our help with this, please let us know.
- Please pay aggressive attention to common areas in public buildings, including significantly increased cleaning frequency of these areas and hand sanitizer stations in common lobbies and hallways.

Symptoms of the COVID-19 in people who have been exposed can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little-to-no symptoms to people becoming severely ill and dying. Wellness labs is currently testing for 5 strains of Coronavirus, including this new COVID-19 Strain. If a positive case for this pandemic strain is detected, the facility will be contacted immediately by one of our directors. The specimen will be sent to the CDC for isolation and confirmation. We will provide a recommendation to immediately proceed to the nearest hospital with the patient in isolation and additional instructions to protect your staff, families, and other patients.

“As this situation evolves, we will continually update our clients,” said Dr. Montgomery “It’s important to remember that the most accurate and timely information regarding this outbreak is available through the Oklahoma Department of Health, as well as the CDC.”

For information and updates related to COVID-19, visit the Oklahoma Department of Health website at <https://www.ok.gov/health/> or https://www.ok.gov/health/Prevention_and_Preparedness/Acute_Disease_Service/Disease_Information/Coronavirus_Disease_2019/index.html