

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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North Country Healthcare Prepared for Any Coronavirus Activity

Whitefield, NH –The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) and North Country Healthcare partners have taken precautions to protect patients, providers, staff, volunteers, and guests from COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus.

To date, NH DHHS key activities have included:

- Activating its Incident Management Team to coordinate its public health response with emergency services, homeland security officials, and other public health partners
- Identifying and investigating people with suspected COVID-19 and their close contacts
- Preparing and shipping specimens to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) for testing while simultaneously working with CDCP to implement the testing locally in the NH Public Health Laboratories
- Providing technical guidance and information to healthcare and public health partners through health alerts, written guidance and webinars

Closer to home, North Country Healthcare partners have:

- Activated Command Centers
- Continued to screen patients at multiple departments as to recent travel itineraries
- Ensured multiple negative air-pressure rooms are available

- Displayed signage regarding the Coronavirus and its symptoms at facility entrances
- Fit-tested clinical and support staff for personal protective equipment and Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs)

There is sustained and widespread transmission of COVID-19 in several countries. The CDC has currently issued travel advisories for the following countries, but given the rapidly changing situation, these advisories are frequently changing*:

- Level 3 Travel Warning (avoid all nonessential travel due to widespread community transmission): China, Iran, Italy and South Korea
- Level 2 Travel Alert (practice enhanced precautions due to sustained community transmission): Japan
- Level 1 Travel Watch (practice usual precautions but limited community spread has been reported): Hong Kong

*Go to <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices> for the most up-to-date travel restrictions issued by the CDC.

New Hampshire hospitals and the New Hampshire Hospital Association have been working closely with the NH Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Public Health Services, the Granite State Health Care Coalition and other partners and stakeholders in sharing up-to-date information on the spread and transmission of COVID-19. In addition, they continue to evaluate current and future resource needs and review response plans for high-threat infectious diseases. Hospitals are taking an active role in meeting with local, state and federal officials to ensure comprehensive approaches are in place to respond to this developing situation.

“The COVID-19 outbreak was first identified in China, and it has since spread to multiple other countries, which has appropriately caused concern about the potential impact on our New Hampshire communities. We have been working closely with our healthcare partners to be able to rapidly identify any individuals suspected of having COVID-19 in order to prevent further spread of this new virus,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan. “We continue to work with hospitals, emergency responders, community organizations, local health departments and public health partners to ensure they are prepared and have the resources they need to respond.”

“This is a rapidly changing situation and we are working closely with our federal, State and local partners to collectively address the challenges of COVID-19,” Dr. Chan continued. “We are closely monitoring the outbreak and remain committed to working with concerned residents, communities and health care providers so we can be prepared to respond and protect the health and well-being of our communities.”

“The providers and staff of North Country Healthcare partners continue to monitor COVID-19 developments and are working closely with the New Hampshire Hospital Association,” commented Tom Mee, RN, BSN, MBA, System, Chief Executive Officer, North Country Healthcare.

Steps which New Hampshire residents can take now to protect themselves include:

- Staying home and avoiding public places when sick (i.e. social distancing)
- Covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing (into your sleeve and not into your hands)
- Washing hands frequently
- Avoiding being within six feet (close contact) of a person who is sick
- Avoiding sharing drinks, smoking/vaping devices, or other utensils or objects that may transmit saliva
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces

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