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Updated CDC Guidance Shifts COVID-19 Testing Priority to At-Risk Groups and Frontline Healthcare Workers

For people who think they might have COVID-19 and have mild symptoms, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends they stay home and call their doctor for medical advice rather than leave home to be tested for the virus. Most people who get COVID-19 will have mild illness and recover at home. Additionally, because there is no treatment for COVID-19, a test will not change what someone with mild symptoms will be instructed to do.

People who are sick with COVID-19 or believe they might have it because they are experiencing fever or **ANY** sort of respiratory symptoms should stay home and separate themselves from others in the home. They can go back to their normal activities when they can answer **YES** to all the following questions:

- Has it been at least 7 days since you first had symptoms?
- Have you been without fever for three days (72 hours) without taking any fever reducing medications?
- Are your other symptoms improved?

Household members and people who have been in close contact with someone who has had symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home as much as possible for 14 days and monitor themselves for symptoms. Close contact means within six feet for 10 minutes or more. If they start having symptoms of COVID-19, they should take the same steps to prevent spreading it.

People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk for severe viral illness. However, to date, data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk for severe illness due to pregnancy. While children are generally at lower risk for severe infection, some studies indicate a higher risk among infants.

Anyone with more serious symptoms should call their doctor or 911 right away. More serious symptoms can include shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, confusion or blue lips.

“To Protect and Promote Health through Prevention and Control of Disease and Injury.”
<http://www.moorecountync.gov/health/>

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The updated guidance is intended to slow the spread of the virus and at the same time conserve important resources for those who are at highest risk. One of the major reasons those with mild symptoms are now told to stay home and recover rather than seek testing is that when people with mild illness leave their homes to get tested, they could expose themselves to COVID-19 if they do not already have it. If they do have COVID-19, they can give it to someone else, including people who are high risk as well as any health care providers who will be needed to care for people with more severe illness.

Furthermore, with limited testing capabilities nationwide and shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), supplies need to be preserved to allow health care providers to care for people who need medical attention. Testing is most important for people who are seriously ill, in the hospital, people in high-risk settings like nursing homes or long-term care facilities, health care workers and other first responders who are caring for those with COVID-19.

For most people, COVID-19 infection will cause only mild illness that does not require medical care. However, it can make some people very ill and, in some people, it can be fatal. While all people can call their doctors if they are concerned about symptoms of COVID-19, it is especially important for people at higher risk for severe illness. According to the CDC, those in the high-risk category include:

- Those who are 65 years and older.
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.
- Those who have a high-risk condition, including chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, heart disease, a compromised immune system, severe obesity with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 and above or those who have other underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, renal failure or liver disease.

Even though testing guidelines have begun to shift, public health officials will continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 closely using a variety of tools normally used to track influenza that have been adapted for this response. This includes testing of samples from a network of clinical sites around the state and tracking emergency department visits and other health care data.

To stay up to date on COVID-19 in North Carolina, visit www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus or text COVIDNC to 898211. Call 2-1-1 (or 888-892-1162) for general questions or for help finding human services resources in your community.

For more information about coronavirus and Moore County's response, please visit www.moorecountync.gov/health.

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