



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Information Office

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COVID-19 Update: 320 Cases **Public Health Director Updates Commissioners**

FAYETTEVILLE – The Department of Public Health reports there are 320 total positive COVID-19 cases involving Cumberland County residents, an increase of 31 since Saturday.

“Health department staff continue to work diligently to conduct case investigations for each positive case in Cumberland County. Contact tracing is a key public health strategy to identify and notify close contacts of positive cases so they can be quarantined,” said Health Director Dr. Jennifer Green.

Eight Cumberland County residents have died from complications associated with the coronavirus. The average age for positive cases is 44 and 53% are female. African Americans make up 37% of the cases. Additional information is available at co.cumberland.nc.us/covid19.

Green updated the Board of Commissioners during their regular meeting this morning. She cited several reasons for the increase in the case count: more testing is being conducted and there is a quicker turnaround time at the state lab; rapid testing is available at a local provider and there are outbreaks in surrounding counties.

Hospitalizations have remained stable, and the county has not seen as many deaths as other communities, she said.

“Each life is critical and important to us,” Green said.

Symptoms Update

The Centers for Disease Control has expanded the list of symptoms or combinations of symptoms for COVID-19. People with coughing and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, as well as at least two of the following symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever
- Chills
- Repeating shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Children have similar symptoms to adults and generally have mild illness.

Testing Update

There are two types of COVID-19 tests available – viral tests and antibody tests. A viral test tells if a patient has a current infection. An antibody test tells if a patient had a previous infection but cannot be used for diagnosis and may not be able to show if there is a current infection. It is not known yet if having antibodies can protect someone from getting infected with COVID-19 again.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is working to increase viral testing. Green reported that the County’s health department has met with local healthcare agencies and partners to find ways to increase testing capacity.

The health department continues to face a shortage of personal protective equipment and not enough trained staff to conduct contact tracing. The department needs about 20 contact tracing staff daily and is using staff from other health department areas. The Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative is hiring 250 staff across the state and the health department will be requesting additional assistance from that pool.

The health department will test patients who meet the NCDHHS guidelines by appointment. The criteria are hospitalized patients; healthcare workers or first responders, patients who live in or have regular contact with a high-risk setting, and persons who are at a higher risk of severe illness and from whom a clinician has determined that results would inform clinical management.

Information Requests

Green said the health department continues to receive requests for information about COVID-19 cases in Cumberland County, but is strictly adhering to federal and state laws.

“We are making sure we are aligned with those federal and state privacy laws before we respond to any request for data,” Green said.

Green encouraged members of the public to check out official data on the County’s COVID-19 page at co.cumberland.nc.us/covid19 or the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Resources at ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19.

Today’s board meeting can be viewed on the County’s YouTube channel at youtube.com/CumberlandCountyNC or Facebook page at facebook.com/CumberlandNC. The meeting will also be re-broadcast on FCETV (Spectrum Cable Channel 5) Wednesday at 7 p.m. and Friday at 10:30 a.m. this week.

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