

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Monday, May 4, 2020

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Ray Manchester - Beach Safety Director of Volusia County

Patricia Boswell - Administrator with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Dr. Joe Smith - Chief Medical Officer for AdventHealth DeLand

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon. And welcome to a new week. I'm Kevin Captain, interim director of community information for Volusia County Government. In just a moment, you'll hear from our great group of speakers, which include:

- Ray Manchester, Volusia County Beach Safety Director
- Patricia Boswell, Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County
- Dr. Joe Smith, Chief Medical Officer for AdventHealth DeLand

But first, last week, Governor DeSantis issued a phased strategy for the state, titled. Safe. Smart. Step-by-step. Plan for Florida's Recovery, which begins today. Since then, he's held several media conferences in cities throughout Florida. Yesterday, he visited Volusia County and held a briefing at Halifax Health Medical Center in Daytona Beach.

He discussed preliminary and precautionary measures taken to ensure hospitals had enough supplies and did not become overwhelmed, including the suspension of elective surgeries. Beginning today, that suspension is lifted and elective surgeries will resume at both Halifax Health and AdventHealth.

Governor DeSantis also spoke about testing, which he said is ramping up statewide. Antibody testing provided by Family Health Source began at 8:30 a.m. today at the Hester Building at the Volusia County Fairgrounds. Within several hours, they had reached their cap for the day. Testing should resume tomorrow at 8:30 a.m. and will remain open until 5 p.m. or until the daily capacity it met, whichever comes first. And it's important to note that this testing is for adults 18 years and older only.

Diagnostic testing continues at the Daytona International Speedway, but AdventHealth has new hours. Effective today, testing is available by appointment only Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until noon. Testing may also be available at local hospitals, urgent care facilities and physician offices. For more information, visit [Volusia dot org forward slash coronavirus](http://Volusia.org/coronavirus).

And now, I'd like to bring up Volusia County Beach Safety Director, Ray Manchester, the Director of Volusia County Beach Safety, to provide an update on our beaches.

Ray Manchester - Beach Safety Director of Volusia County

Good afternoon, Ray Manchester, Director of Beach Safety for Volusia County. As many of you are probably aware, the beaches reopened for most normal activities this past weekend. The exercise or physical exercise requirement was lifted, and we opened up limited off-beach parking. Other than three beach vehicle ramps for handicapped access, all other beach ramps remain closed to vehicles at this time. This was all done to limit crowds and maintain safety.

We also opened up our two coastal parks, Lighthouse Point Park and Smyrna Dunes Park. Due to challenges with decontamination, the public restrooms remain closed. These facilities present a challenge, because they create an opportunity for the easy spread of germs and bacteria. We are looking at all our options and working towards being fully open and operational soon.

We did have beautiful beach weather this weekend, with early afternoon low tides and plenty of sunshine. We saw crowds this weekend, as was expected, but for the most part, beachgoers spaced out and kept groups small. The heaviest crowds were near large off-beach parking lots and hotels that have reopened.

Over the weekend, we issued just over 900 warnings in reference to social distancing. And, that may sound like a lot, but for the number of the people at the beach this weekend, it's expected. And when I say we issued warnings, what that means is, is that we provided information and education to keep people safe. I'd also like to remind everyone that alcohol is not permitted on our beaches. Additionally, always swim in front of a staffed lifeguard tower. We rescued just under 100 people from rip currents this past weekend alone.

I'd like to thank everyone for their patience and compliance. And, now I'll turn it over to Patricia Boswell, Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

Patricia Boswell - Administrator with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Good afternoon. Today the Florida Department of Health updated the statistics for Volusia County. Our county has a total of 514 cases, of which 131 have been cleared, which means they are no longer being monitored. We had 85 hospitalizations, 26 deaths. This includes 15 deaths due to COVID-19 in long-term care facilities, and these numbers are cumulative.

As we enter into phase one it is important to remember that social distancing is still essential. As you know that social distancing measures were implemented in an effort to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. These measures are working and we need to continue to prevent transmission from accelerating again. As we reopen the general guidance of everyone includes frequent handwashing, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cover your cough. Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces as much as possible. And, remember, if you feel sick, stay at home. We continue to identify, test and isolate people at high risk of infection. This is done by identifying potential cases through contact tracing and monitoring upon positive cases. We focus on finding cases, tracing and then warning known contacts and isolating those cases.

Long term care facilities are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and we are a part of a multi-agency response to prevent outbreaks. We've been reaching out to facilities to provide help with testing of their staff. This week a team from Region Five is planning on visiting 13 facilities and next week 18 facilities.

Information is updated once a day at www.floridahealthcovid19.gov. Thank you.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Boswell, and now we will move to Dr. Joe Smith, who is not joining us virtually. Dr. Joe Smith is the Chief Medical Officer for AdventHealth DeLand. Good afternoon Dr. Smith.

Dr. Joe Smith - Chief Medical Officer for AdventHealth DeLand

Good afternoon Kevin; thank you for having me. It is a great opportunity to be here. I would like to reiterate that as we are going into this phase of reopening, just as our previous speaker said, it is very important that we continue to practice hand hygiene, to make sure that we are covering our mouth,

that we are not going into places when we are feeling under the weather and that we continue to do all of the things that we have done to thwart this virus and it's spread. Social distancing worked very well and as we begin to relax it is very important that we continue to do our part. Just as a recap of sort of the national situation, we have had approximately 1.1 million Americans test positive for COVID-19, with about 68,000 deaths. Here in Florida that's translated to about 37,000 positive cases with 1,400 deaths. In Volusia County just over 500 positive cases with 26 deaths, which is very unfortunate. But, I want to reiterate that this number was very much contained because of all of the measures that were put into place.

Now, that was very important as we enter into this next phase that we do all of the things that we've been doing very well so far and that we begin to expand our horizons and get back to something that is much more normal. To date AdventHealth has tested about 51,000 people, and I am pleased to announce that we have opened up drive-in testing sites throughout central Florida and regardless of your insurance status, those tests will be provided to you at no cost. That is something that I think is very special that we can provide to the community.

I want to re-emphasize how safe our hospitals are. Today, as we begin to bring patients back into the hospitals for elective surgery under Governor DeSantis's order, our staff is being tested and you will see that we are all wearing masks at least surgical quality masks or an N95 mask if we are in a position where we are working with a COVID patient. So, our staff are in PPE, we are being tested, we are doing temperature checks at every shift change as we come into the building. I am also very pleased to announce to you that we are able to allow patients to have a visitor come once a day. That visitor will be placed in a surgical mask and will have their temperature checked, and asked if they are feeling well. But, it is very important to us that as an organization that our patients have everyone in their life that helps them feel whole and helps them heal and come here and visit them. I am very pleased to show that our clinics are reopening throughout the community so that you should be able to see your doctor much more easily than the most stringent phase of the stay at home and lock down order. We are doing things like putting markers on the floor so that people can stay six feet apart. We have other situations where maybe we send you a text so you can come into the office and you aren't sitting in a crowded lobby with a lot of people. We want to make sure that we continue to respect the spirit of social distancing as we help to bring people back into the health care world.

We have some pretty exciting stuff to report regarding some the treatments available. To date we have administered the convalescent serum to approximately 20 patients. We are a part of a national study

working with Sarilumab which is a medication that was initially designed and used for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Working off the anti-inflammatory test gate hypothesis of treatment and disease manifestation. And, we've also been able to acquire Remdesvir, which is medication originally used and intended to treat Ebola virus, which we are able to use now to treat COVID-19. Though, again, really exciting stuff from a medical standpoint in terms of the new therapies and testing that is available. I think that the take home message for the community is, be smart about coming back into your life and know that the hospital is safe. If you know that you are having an emergency or feeling sick, the safest place that you can be is here with us. We are doing everything that it takes to make it safe for you to come in to get that care. We are ready for the community to start healing. Let's start healing.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Dr. Smith, that is very good information. As a reminder, we have a County Council meeting tomorrow. Public comments can be submitted online or through an on-site kiosk, at the Thomas C. Kelley Administration Center in DeLand. The meeting begins at 10 a.m. and can be view online at Volusia dot org forward slash live meeting. On the agenda is a review of Relaunch Volusia, the county's detailed, phased approach to reopening county services and facilities.

We do have two Facebook questions; one for Dr. Smith, and one that is related to the beach. There are a couple of questions on when we will be able to drive again on the beach. And, we will reiterate that this is a phased reopening, and so as we get to those more advanced phases, beach driving will eventually be permitted when it is deemed safe to do so. They are also purchasing some markers to go onto the beach to make sure the spacing between the cars is larger and increased. So, those are things that are all being planned at this time for the future of being able to drive on the beach.

We do have a Facebook question Kate, if you would like to read that for Dr. Smith.

Question: Dr. Smith, Jess R. would like you to address wearing masks in public shared spaces?

Dr. Joe Smith - Chief Medical Officer for AdventHealth DeLand

Answer: Great question. A mask is not a mask is not a mask, so Jess, the answer to your question actually depends on the type of mask. They are actually designed to do two very different things. I have two different masks with me.

This is an N95 mask respirator. And, this is the type of mask that is used in healthcare when we are working with someone who has an infection where we can inhale viral or bacterial particles that could make us sick ourselves. You can also see these masks used in industry. Sometimes when you see people working with dusts, like someone who is working with paints or sands fiberglass, will wear this. These types of mask will protect you from inhaling particles.

The much more common type mask, and I have one that was made by someone for us here that we've had donated, and you can see that these types of masks that are made at home, or this kind of mask that is a surgical mask. These masks really help you from spreading your own respiratory droplets from coming out into the community. What I would say is that if you want to be extra good citizen, is not a bad idea to wear a mask like that. And, as we know, up to 50 to 80 percent, maybe as low as 30, and we are still learning a lot about this virus, a large percentage of people who have this virus don't know that they are sick. That would be a way for your to protect your community and diminish the spread if you were one of those people who has the virus but does not know it because you don't feel sick. But, what I want to caution against is that kind of false sense of security that you might get from wearing a mask like this or a surgical mask and that is to say that it does not prevent you from inhaling viral particles. But, again, the real spread is from these two things right here; your hands. It is very, very important that you do not touch things and then touch your face without washing your hands 20 to 30 seconds with warm soap and water or using some sanitizer gel that contains alcohol. Because, the real way that this virus is spread, in the vast majority of cases, is you touch something then your mouth, your nose or your eyes, and that is how you get sick. So, if you want to be an extra good citizen, you can wear a mask but it certainly is no required, but what is required is that you exercise excellent hand hygiene and discipline in touching your face.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Dr. Smith; that is very good information. I also want to thank Ms. Boswell and Mr. Manchester for participating in today's briefing, and that concludes the briefing for Monday, May 4th. We will see you back on Wednesday, May 6th for another update. Meanwhile we ask that everyone take care and stay safe.