



COVID-19 Information

Updated March 10, 2020

The public health and safety of all residents in Montgomery County is our top priority. County leaders are taking the public health threat of COVID-19 seriously and are united in meeting this challenge head on.

County leaders are in constant communications with our state and federal public health and safety partners, and these experts have been collaborating and training to deal with public health issues of this type for years. In addition, Montgomery County is fortunate to be home to the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, an outstanding hospital system staffed with remarkable medical professionals and numerous cutting-edge biotechnology companies.

While new information on COVID-19 is emerging each day, the information below covers some of the most relevant topics.

Prevention

According to health experts, one of the most effective and easiest ways to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds and to use hand sanitizer when soap and water isn't available. County facilities also have increased their cleaning protocols to keep members of the public and our employees as safe as possible.

If people wash their hands thoroughly, stay home if sick, and limit contact with others who are sick, the risk to residents of contracting COVID-19 is low. So far, the cases identified in our community have produced symptoms in the mild to moderate range.

Community members who are 60 and older, especially those with underlying medical conditions, are encouraged to avoid large crowds and to contact their medical provider if they develop a fever, shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms.

For additional information, visit Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Service's web page at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/coronavirus> or the Maryland Department of Health's web page at <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx> .

Preparation

Residents are also advised to prepare as you would for any event that could keep you at home for 14 days by ensuring that you have adequate supplies of food and medication. It is also important to make sure that your vaccinations are up-to-date including your seasonal flu shot, which is important for overall health.

Testing

There also have been many questions related to the testing criteria for COVID-19. The Maryland Department of Health advises our medical community based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control. You can read the guidance that is being provided to local health care professionals by the state at <https://tinyurl.com/DHHSGuidance> .

There also will be situations where a health care provider has a suspicion of COVID-19 but the individual doesn't meet the testing criteria. In these cases, the health care provider is encouraged to call the County's Department of Health and Human Services to discuss testing.

We encourage all community members to contact their health care provider if they have traveled internationally or have an exposure risk and have a fever, cough or shortness of breath. Health care providers will work with state and local health officials should an individual be in a high risk group based on their travel history or exposure and **they** will make the determination if someone needs testing for COVID-19. Residents may also contact the County's Department of Health and Human Services' Disease Control Unit at 240-777-1755 and speak with a nurse for guidance. In addition, the Maryland Department of Health is available at 410-767-6700 or 410-795-7365 (after business hours).

Testing cost

In Maryland, all state health insurers have been directed to waive the costs associated with testing for COVID-19. Governor Hogan issued a directive that waives any cost-sharing, co-payments, coinsurance and deductibles to remove cost barriers to testing. State health carriers have also been encouraged to offer telehealth services and to prepare to cover the costs of vaccinations for COVID-19 once a vaccination is available.

Privacy

As far as disclosing the city or cities where those who have tested positive for COVID-19 live, the Maryland Department of Health is conducting the investigation of these cases and is limiting non-essential information to protect the privacy of these individuals and to ensure the integrity of their investigation.

Schools

The potential for school closings is a major concern for parents, students and teachers. Like Montgomery County government, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to the health and safety of our school community. MCPS is working with both the state and county health departments to monitor this ever-changing situation and is prepared to implement all public health recommendations.

If a school is required to close, MCPS follows guidance from the County's Department of Health and Human Services about bringing a school and bus service back to normal operations. In addition, MCPS workers will return prior to students and school staff to ensure the cleanliness and sanitation of the school. Moreover, MCPS is prepared to provide meals at several schools and regional meal sites depending on the length of time that a school may be closed.

MCPS is providing ongoing updates on COVID-19 issues. Please visit their web page for more information: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/coronavirus/>.

State of emergency

Finally, some residents are concerned that Governor Hogan has issued a state of emergency for Maryland. This official designation provides flexibility for the governor to coordinate with federal and state agencies, local health departments and emergency management teams. It also enables him to tap into resources he wouldn't otherwise have access to and to streamline the procurement process. In addition, issuing a state of emergency allows some state personnel to shift from daily duties to support a statewide response.

The Village at Rockville

At The Village at Rockville there was a risk of COVID-19 exposure during a community event on Feb. 28. Administrators, staff and residents are working closely with the Maryland Department of Health to follow their recommended procedures for monitoring through March 14, 2020. In an abundance of caution, The Village at Rockville has postponed all gathering and public events until March 14.