



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

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Santa Cruz County Public Health Officials Confirm COVID-19 Cases

SANTA CRUZ –The County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division is announcing the community’s third and fourth cases of COVID-19.

On the evening of March 10, testing confirmed COVID-19 in a patient who presented with symptoms of coronavirus. The patient is currently isolated and hospitalized in a different county and is recovering. Although the exposure is still under investigation, it is unlikely that it was acquired through community-spread in Santa Cruz County.

On March 11, testing confirmed COVID-19 in a patient associated with Rio Del Mar Elementary in Aptos. The patient is stable and the exposure is still under investigation. Santa Cruz County Public Health is coordinating with the County Office of Education and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to mitigate any exposures.

As with previous cases, Santa Cruz County Public Health is conducting thorough investigations to identify potential exposures and notifying contacts. The patients are now in isolation and recovering.

Santa Cruz County Public Health expects additional cases to be confirmed in the near future, and is urging residents to prepare for the likelihood of ‘community spread’ cases. Santa Cruz County Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel has issued social distancing and workplace guidelines, which are in place through March 22. The County appreciates the communitywide cooperation and response during this difficult time.

"Ours is a community that cares, and we are overwhelmed by the number of organizations that have made sacrifices on behalf of public health," said Dr. Gail Newel, County of Santa Cruz Health Officer. "We all have a duty to ourselves and our families to take the necessary steps to keep our community healthy."



The County previously reported two cases of confirmed COVID-19. While COVID-19 is non-lethal for the vast majority of patients and many do not require medical oversight, the disease does present a serious risk for medically vulnerable individuals, particularly those over 60 years old and people with certain pre-existing medical conditions.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and may appear in as few as two or up to 14 days after exposure. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care physician's office, especially if you have recently traveled to areas with a COVID-19 outbreak or have had contact with a known case of COVID-19. Before seeking medical attention, call first to prevent possible transmission in the health care setting.

Previously, testing was available only through approved public health laboratories, with strict screening criteria limiting the number of people who are tested. However, commercial testing began this week and is expected to become widely available. It is anticipated that these additional tests will lead to additional confirmed cases.

Santa Cruz County Public Health strongly urges community members to take precautions to help prevent the spread of illness:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water, rubbing for at least 20 seconds;
- Use at least 60% alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hand, or use a tissue and discard;
- Avoid shaking hands;
- Don't touch your face with unwashed hands;
- Regularly clean surfaces touched by many people using normal household cleaners;
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick; and
- Get a flu shot to protect yourself and others from flu, which has similar symptoms to COVID-19.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak. Preparedness actions include:

- Make sure your emergency preparedness kit is up to date. Stock additional supplies if possible. Visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for an Emergency Supply List and other preparedness materials
- Obtain two to three months' supply of your critical prescriptions. Stock up on essential medication for all family members.
- Prepare to work from home if possible.
- Prepare a childcare plan if you or a caregiver are sick.
- Make arrangements to manage a school dismissal of at least two weeks.
- Plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.
- Take care of each other and check in by phone with friends, family and neighbors that are vulnerable to serious illness or death if they get COVID-19.
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly with disinfecting sprays, wipes or common household cleaning products.

For local information, residents may visit www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus, call 211 or text "coronavirus" to 211211. Messaging rates may apply.