Governor Ron DeSantis directed State Surgeon General Scott Rivkees to declare a public health emergency in Florida as two patients tested presumptively positive for COVID-19 in Hillsborough and Manatee Counties. **According to the Florida Department of Health, the risk to the public in Florida remains low.**

VISIT FLORIDA has been working closely with the Florida Department of Health and has been monitoring COVID-19 for the past several weeks.

- **The federal government has not recommended limiting domestic travel. Here is specific information from the [CDC regarding travel](#).**
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. As a reminder, the Department of Health always recommends everyday preventive actions to help impede the spread of respiratory diseases, including:**
  - Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
  - Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
  - Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
  - Covering your cough or sneezing with a tissue, then disposing of the issue;
  - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if hands are visibility dirty;
  - Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- **With the situation evolving rapidly, we encourage the traveling public and Floridians to follow any guidance offered by the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the [Florida Department of Health's website.](#)

You may also find more information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may land on objects and surfaces. Other people may contract COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from the COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. As a reminder, the Department always recommends everyday preventive actions to help impede the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
- Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then disposing of the issue;

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty;
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

The CDC does not recommend that asymptomatic, healthy people wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

A person that experiences a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and any other destination under CDC travel advisory should call ahead to their health care provider and local county health department (CHD) and mention their recent travel or close contact.

If a person has had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area or been in contact with a person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, they should call ahead to a health care professional and the county health department. The health care professional will work with the Department to determine if the person should be tested for COVID-19.

Please visit the Department's dedicated COVID-19 webpage at www.FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19. This remains the best and most up-to-date resource for information and guidance regarding COVID-19 in Florida.

For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact the Department's dedicated COVID-19 Call Center by calling 1-(866) 779-6121 or emailing COVID-19@flhealth.gov. **The Call Center is available Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm.**

In addition, please visit http://www.floridahealth.gov/all-county-locations.html to locate and obtain contact information for your local CHD.

The CDC also has a website with information related to COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.