

THE TRUSTEE

March 2020
THE PANDEMIC

Like you, we have been following the on-going developments across the nation and around the world regarding declarations of a State of Emergency and the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). It is sure to cause some anxiety and uncertainty, especially among those with chronic and/or complex conditions. High-risk patients have symptoms and are defined as elderly, those with chronic medical conditions such as COPD, diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, or definite exposure to a known case of Coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is encouraging people at higher risk for COVID-19 complications to stay at home as much as possible. For prescriptions, mail order is preferred for all maintenance drugs and, for first time fills; many local pharmacies feature home delivery.

If you have a doctor's appointment, try to attend alone unless it is critical for someone to accompany you into the office. All who enter will be asked screening questions regarding Coronavirus and may be asked to wear a mask. Within the office, keep a 6' distance between yourself and others.

The federal government, as per the news conference on Friday, March 13, is promising a website where you can evaluate your status and, if you think you may be positive for the virus, use a locator on the website of drive up Coronavirus testing. Instead of testing everyone, as some symptoms of an infected person may not occur for days, the Trump administration, unlike all other nations, is recommending only those with symptoms should be tested.

Again, stay home if you have been in close contact with a person confirmed with Coronavirus in the last 14 days or feel you have been exposed to the Coronavirus. Do not visit a medical facility unannounced. If it's your doctor's office, call your provider prior to coming into the office. If you have reported your symptoms to the Ulster County Health Department and they have asked you to stay home on isolation, that's what you should do. The same pertains to work. A teacher at the Greece School district north of Rochester exhibited symptoms, yet still went to work. The school closed immediately and all in the school community need to self-isolate. You will likely have to be home for at least 14 days after your potential exposure. You might be asked to take your temperature twice a day, and report to your doctor or the health department if you feel sick or develop a fever.

The United States and South Korea both had their first confirmed Coronavirus patient on January 20, 2020. Since then, South Korea has tested everyone, symptoms or not: 240,000 as of March 13, 2020, including ramping up to 10,000/day and, now, 20,000/day. The U.S. has tested 13,953 in total (The Atlantic).

State and private labs were restricted from developing their own tests due to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) protocol of Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The FDA clears labs to develop their own tests during an outbreak, such as Ebola or Zika. Authorization was not granted until February 29, more than a month after the first positive diagnosis.

So, here we are, almost two months removed from the first positive diagnosis, and the greatest number of testing kits are not due to arrive for another week. Responsible leaders are anticipating an

increase in positive outcomes and have taken appropriate steps, such as closing schools and cancelling events, in attempting to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Experts have been warning about the next pandemic for years and criticized the Trump administration's decision in 2018 to dismantle a National Security Council directorate for Global Health and Security and Bio-Defense at the White House charged with preparing for when, not if, another pandemic would hit the nation.

Additionally, the fiscal 2021 White House budget proposal calls for a \$693.3 million reduction to the CDC's funding compared with what was enacted for fiscal 2020 (CDC Budget Document). That would be a 9% reduction in the CDC's budget. The president's budget proposal was released on Feb. 10, after the COVID-19 outbreak began and the first U.S. case was confirmed on January 20. Here are website to search for updates:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

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