

County of Santa Clara Public Health Department

Reports Third Case of COVID-19

For immediate release

February 28, 2020

For more information contact:

County of Santa Clara Public Health Communications

Media Line: (408) 794-0707

News highlights:

- The third case of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County and is not related to other cases.
- The third case had no known exposure to the virus through travel or close contact with a known infected individual.
- Now is the time to prepare for the possibility of widespread community transmission.

Santa Clara County - The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department confirms the third case of COVID-19. This is the third case to be identified in our County, but is different from the other two cases since this person does not have a travel history nor any known contact with a traveler or infected person.

The individual is an older adult woman with chronic health conditions who was hospitalized for a respiratory illness. Her infectious disease physician contacted the Public Health Department to discuss the case and request testing for the novel coronavirus. The County of Santa Clara Public Health Laboratory received the specimens yesterday and performed the testing. Since receiving the results last night, the department has been working to identify contacts and understand the extent of exposures.

Due to medical privacy requirements and to protect her identity, further information about this case will not be released.

“This new case indicates that there is evidence of community transmission but the extent is still not clear,” said Dr. Sara Cody, Health Officer for Santa Clara County and Director of the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department. “I understand this may be concerning to hear, but this is what we have been preparing for. Now we need to start taking additional actions to slow down the spread of the disease.”

This case is important because it signals that now is the time to change course. The public health measures taken so far – isolation, quarantine, contact tracing, and travel restrictions – have helped to slow the spread of the disease. The department will continue to implement these measures and continue to trace close contacts of our cases to protect the health of individuals and our community.

Since the disease is here, an important priority for the department will be to conduct community surveillance to determine the extent of local transmission. Since the County Public Health Laboratory has the ability to run the test, the department can quickly evaluate what is happening in our community.

For individuals, the recommendations are very simple, but very important:

- Keep your hands clean. It is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. And always need to cover your cough and stay home when you are sick.
- Today, start working on not touching your face because one way viruses spread is when you touch your own mouth, nose or eyes.
- Since we know the disease is here, we all need to stay away from people who are sick.
- Start thinking about family preparedness, how to take care of sick family while not getting infected. Think about a room to isolate a sick person.

There are practical measures that can help limit spread by reducing exposure in community settings:

- Schools: should plan for absenteeism and explore options for tele-learning and enhance surface cleaning.
- Businesses: whenever possible, can replace in-person meetings with video or telephone conferences and increase teleworking options and modify absenteeism policies and also enhance surface cleaning.

The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department is working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State of California Department of Public Health, and other partners as the new coronavirus situation continues to change. Information will be updated as soon as possible on our website: <http://sccphd.org/coronavirus>

The news conference will be streamed live at on the department's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sccpublichealth/>
Last updated: 2/28/2020 3:49 PM