

February 28, 2020

Health officials continue investigating as they urge good hand hygiene, covering coughs, staying home if sick

PORTLAND, Ore.—Oregon Health Authority has confirmed Oregon’s first, presumptive case of novel coronavirus, COVID-19, public health officials announced today.

The case, an adult resident of Washington County, experienced symptoms of COVID-19 beginning Feb. 19, and a sample was collected from the individual today. The sample was sent to the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory in Hillsboro, which used the new COVID-19 test kit it received Wednesday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The lab tested the sample today—only hours after it validated the new CDC test kit.

“Our first concern is for this individual, to make sure they’re being cared for and is able to recover,” said OHA Director Patrick Allen. “Our next priority is finding out who this individual had contact with and make sure they know about their risks, and to let them know how they can get care if they need it. We said this was a fast-moving situation, and that has proved to be true.”

The case was not a person under monitoring or a person under investigation. The individual had neither a history of travel to a country where the virus was circulating, nor is believed to have had a close contact with another confirmed case—the two most common sources of exposure. As such, public health officials are considering it a likely community-transmitted case, meaning that the origin of the infection is unknown.

“We are awaiting confirmation of the test results from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but at this time we are considering this a presumptive case,” said Dean Sidelinger, MD, MSed. “The person is now in appropriate isolation and appropriate care.”

The individual spent time in a school in the Lake Oswego school district and may have exposed students and staff there. Public health officials will investigate potential exposures there and contact employees and families of children to let them know next steps.

The individual has been isolated and is being cared for at Kaiser Permanente Westside Medical Center in Hillsboro.

OHA epidemiologists are working closely with public health investigators at Washington County Department of Health and Human Services to identify close contacts of the case.

OHA officials continue to recommend people in Oregon take everyday precautions to prevent the spread of many respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 and influenza:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are often touched.
- Take care of your health overall. Staying current on your vaccinations, including flu vaccine, eating well and exercising all help your body stay resilient.
- Consult CDC’s travel website for any travel advisories and steps to protect yourself if you plan to travel outside of the US.

For more information

- For general information, call 211
- OHA Emerging Respiratory Disease page: www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus
- CDC COVID-19 page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDC travel notice: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>
- WHO page: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>