



ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES
Partners in Public Health

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES REPORTS COVID-19 COMMUNITY
SPREAD**

Case Counts do not give true picture of disease impact

Elizabeth City, NC – Albemarle Regional Health Services (ARHS) is continuing to provide its eight county service region with ongoing information on the spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- By touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching his or her own eyes, nose or mouth.

Droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms, or a few days before symptoms begin.

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Therefore, maintaining good social distance (about 6 feet) is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

“The number of people with lab confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our region does not reflect the number of people who have actually been infected — or who are carrying the virus without symptoms,” states R. Battle Betts, Jr., MPA ARHS Health Director. “Asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission are major factors in the spread of COVID-19. Research has indicated the virus can be passed from person to person between 1 to 3 days before symptoms actually appear. The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading very easily between people – even in the ARHS region.”

It is important to continue to practice all guidelines included in the Governor’s Stay at Home Order each and every day. Stay at home except for essential work or to visit essential businesses, to exercise outdoors, or to help a family member. Do not gather in groups of more than ten people and stay at least six feet apart from others. These orders are in place to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and lessen the number of sick individuals.

North Carolina will continue to track and post the number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases. However, it is important to recognize that there are many people with COVID-19 who will not be included in daily counts of laboratory-confirmed cases, including:

- People who had minimal or no symptoms and were not tested.
- People who had symptoms but did not seek medical care.
- People who sought medical care but were not tested.
- People with COVID-19 in whom the virus was not detected by testing.

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Therefore, the number of laboratory-confirmed cases through testing will increasingly provide a limited picture of the spread of infections in the state as COVID-19 becomes more widespread and the number of people in the first three groups above increases.

ARHS will also continue to follow North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) guidelines on contact tracing of lab confirmed positive cases of COVID19. Close contacts are defined as having direct contact with, or been within six feet for at least 10 minutes. Contact tracing aims to identify all individuals who may have had close contact with the lab confirmed case. “Contact tracing is a tried and trusted public health approach that has been used for years to help prevent the spread of infection in order to contain and stop outbreaks,” said Betts.

ARHS is continuing to ask our community citizens to be vigilant in practicing preventive and safety measures that will help prevent the spread of the virus and prevent the spread of COVID-19. These precautions include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and 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 hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Practice social distancing; stay at least six feet away from others, avoid unnecessary travel, avoid handshakes, hugs and other close contact.

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Further information about COVID-19 can be found here:

Albemarle Regional Health Services - <http://www.arhs-nc.org/> or call 252-338-WELL

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services - <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>

Center for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

For more information, please contact Amy Underhill, ARHS Public Information Officer at 252-338-4448 or aunderhill@arhs-nc.org.

Albemarle Regional Health Services is dedicated to disease prevention and the promotion of a healthy environment to reduce morbidity, mortality, and disability through quality service, education, and advocacy.

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