

Answers to frequently asked questions about COVID-19

Questions about what officials are doing

Q: Is the surge in cases we're seeing a result of increased testing?

A: It is true that testing has increased in Victoria County since the pandemic began, but that alone is not enough to account for the increase in infections. However, the more cases we have, the more testing will be performed.

Q: Does the confirmed case count include positive antibody tests?

A: No. Only viral tests, which show an active infection, are counted. However, if you receive a positive antibody test showing you have had COVID-19, it is recommended that you get a viral test to determine if you have an active infection.

Q: Will more dates be added for walk-up testing at the Victoria Community Center?

A: Currently, there are no plans to provide further walk-up testing. The testing June 25 and 26 was provided in coordination with the Texas Military Department and the Department of State Health Services, which have been providing walk-up testing around the state. There are no plans for a second round of tests in Victoria at this time.

Q: What is Victoria doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: The Victoria County Public Health Department is monitoring the situation in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management, the City of Victoria, Victoria County, first responders and health care and education officials to determine best practices to protect people from catching or spreading the virus. The health department gets regular updates from the CDC and other sources, so these decisions are based on the latest available information.

Q: How many people have gotten sick in Victoria?

A: Information about new cases and updated case counts will be provided through the Victoria County Public Health Department Facebook page and at the press briefings. The case count includes all Victoria County residents who have been infected, even if they contracted the virus outside of Victoria County.

Q: What information can be released at what times about patients?

A: If there is a confirmed case, the health department will release some basic details such as the person's age and gender, whether the case is suspected community transmission and what steps are being taken to contain the infection. This information may not be available right away but

will be released as soon as it becomes available. The health department will not release any identifying information about the person.

Q: Will any public events in Victoria be canceled?

A: The City of Victoria and Victoria County will take steps to cancel City- and County-sponsored public events that would attract gatherings that would exceed guidelines established by the CDC or by state and local orders.

Q: How will this impact local EMTs and first responders?

A: Our first responders, which include EMTs and dispatchers, are continually updating their procedures based on discussions with the health department and the Office of Emergency Management so that they can respond effectively to suspected COVID-19 cases and limit exposure for themselves and others. That includes asking questions about travel history to determine whether someone might have been exposed, and it also includes wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks and making sure that, if they have to bring someone to a hospital who has COVID-19-like symptoms, the hospital is aware of that so they can prepare. These are measures that will not only protect our first responders but will keep the virus from spreading if someone does have it.

Q: Does Victoria County have the ability to test for COVID-19?

A: A list of sample collection sites in Victoria and elsewhere in the Crossroads can be found by going to victoriatioem.org and clicking “COVID-19 testing” or visiting the Victoria County Public Health Department Facebook page. The samples will be sent to a state or private lab for testing.

Q: Who will test you?

A: Samples will be collected by a health care professional, and the health care provider will then send those samples to a lab for testing.

Q: Will the health department test me?

A: The health department is only able to collect select specimens that require special handling or under special circumstances in coordination with health care providers. You should reach out to a medical provider if you think you need a test.

Q: How many tests have been administered, and how many tests have come back negative?

A: Testing counts are updated daily at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/additionaldata/>. All testing facilities, including private labs, are required by law to report positive tests to the Texas

Department of State Health Services. The only positive tests in Victoria County are the ones that have been reported by the health department.

Q: What is the length of time for results of specimens sent to a lab?

A: Results are expected to take 48 hours to 7 days but could take longer depending on lab capacity. While patients are awaiting results of testing, they need to remain isolated along with their family and household members.

Questions about what I should do

Q: I've heard that a person can get carbon dioxide poisoning from wearing a mask. Is this true?

A: No. Carbon dioxide particles can pass freely through the fabric of the mask. You may feel stuffy while wearing a mask for a long period of time, but it will not restrict flow of carbon dioxide.

Q: Should I go to the hospital/other medical provider if I am sick?

A: Yes. Putting off needed medical care can pose serious risks to your health. Your medical provider can provide more information about the steps they are taking to protect patients.

Q: I heard that there was an outbreak at Citizens. Is it safe for me to go there?

A: Yes. The outbreak at Citizens is contained, and medical staff wear personal protective equipment when interacting with patients. Currently, all of the confirmed cases associated with the outbreak have been medical personnel, not patients.

Q: What should I do to protect myself from getting infected?

A: Take the same precautions that you would to protect yourself from the flu or other respiratory illnesses. Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, cover your coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and avoid close contact with people who are sick. Whenever possible, avoid public places and avoid coming within 6 feet of people outside your household. Remember that a person can spread the virus before they feel sick, so you should take precautions even if you feel well.

Q: Should I wear a mask?

A: Current CDC guidance states that people should wear cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain. This could be a mask or another covering such as a scarf or bandana. You should wash your face covering after each use. Wearing a face covering will help to protect those around you if you are carrying the virus without knowing it.

Members of the general public should not wear the medical N95 respirator mask. These masks are a scarce medical resource that must be reserved for health care workers.

Q: Should I cancel my travel plans?

A: The health department and CDC can provide you with up-to-date information on infection rates in different places and the risks associated with visiting those places. If you do decide to travel, you should be especially cautious and self-monitor in case you develop any symptoms.

Q: Is it true that there are different coronaviruses?

A: The coronavirus that you've been hearing about on the news is part of a family of coronaviruses that cause different types of illnesses, including the common cold and more flulike illnesses. The new virus, which you may have heard referred to as "the COVID-19 virus" or simply "the new coronavirus," is one that first appeared in China in December and then spread to other parts of the world.

Q: What makes this virus different from other coronaviruses or respiratory illnesses?

A: In terms of symptoms, it's not that different; they are similar. Most people who get this virus will only have a mild illness, although older people and people with other health problems are more at risk for serious complications. Current data suggests that COVID-19 is more contagious than the flu.

The fact that this virus is so new means, first, that there's no vaccine, which is why it's so difficult to keep it from spreading. And, second, we have very limited information about it. But as time goes on, researchers will learn more about it and hopefully develop a vaccine.

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

A: The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are coughing and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Other symptoms include fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell.

As with all new information about COVID-19, this information is subject to change as researchers learn more about the virus. Please refer to [coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for the latest information about symptoms.

Q: I think I or someone I know might have COVID-19. What should I do?

A: Don't go to a health care facility without calling first. Call your doctor or health care provider, and they'll ask you some questions to determine whether you might be infected.

Most people who are otherwise in good health will have only a mild reaction to the virus, similar to a flu reaction. But even if you have a mild case, please stay home if you are sick and do your part to protect the health of your community.

Q: What if I do not have a primary care physician?

A: Call ahead to your local urgent care facility. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call your local hospital or emergency room. If you call 911, let the dispatcher know you suspect you have COVID-19.

Q: Should people donate blood during this time? Are blood donations being screened?

A: The South Texas Blood and Tissue Center is encouraging people to donate blood because blood supplies are low as blood drives are being canceled. Donors will be asked questions about travel history and may be asked to delay donations based on suspected exposure. This is done out of an abundance of caution; respiratory illnesses are not believed to be spread through blood transfusions.

Q: Can I take my child to a day care facility?

A: Texas Health and Human Services has issued guidance to licensed day care providers on how to screen children and visitors for COVID-19 and how to ensure sanitary conditions. Contact your local day care provider to find out what steps they are taking to keep people safe. For more information on licensing requirements, email Child Care Licensing at msc@hhsc.state.tx.us.

For more information, visit:

www.victoriatxoem.org

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>