



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 14, 2020

Department of Health Prepared for Fall Surge in COVID-19 Cases, Working to Protect Pennsylvanians

Harrisburg, PA – Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine today highlighted the work under way to prepare Pennsylvania for a fall resurgence in COVID-19 cases, and to make sure all Pennsylvanians are as protected as possible from both COVID-19 and influenza.

“We have seen more than 1,000 cases a day for the past nine days, which shows that we are at the start of a fall resurgence of COVID-19,” Dr. Levine said. “While we are working to expand testing, prepare for a vaccine and prevent outbreaks, Pennsylvanians have an important role to play. We must be united by wearing a mask, washing our hands, social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, downloading the [COVID Alert PA mobile app](#) and getting a flu vaccine.”

The department [announced earlier today](#) that the first allotment of rapid antigen test cards are being distributed to several counties that are seeing increased cases of COVID-19 across the state. These test cards, provided by the federal government to the state, will be distributed to certified institutions, including long-term care facilities, personal care homes, assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, higher education institutions, drug and alcohol and behavioral treatment centers, correctional facilities and other health care providers in these counties to assist in rapid testing in these communities.

“With the increase in testing and cases, the department is continuing efforts to conduct case investigations and contact tracing,” Dr. Levine said. “However, for these efforts to be successful, it is important for Pennsylvanians to participate in the process. If you are contacted by a case investigator or contact tracer, it is essential that you answer the phone and participate in the interview.”

As cases have increased, a team of staff is working to assess where outbreaks are occurring. This includes close surveillance of congregate care facilities, like long-term care facilities, college and university campuses and prisons and jails. The department also has been working to assist in areas where there are outbreaks and to provide resources. These resources may include infection control expertise, connection to testing resources, and working to assist stakeholders with questions.

The department also is preparing for the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine, once a safe and effective vaccine is developed and approved. The department has been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to plan for the distribution of the vaccine when it becomes available. Early on there may be limited supply of vaccine distributed in a phased approach. The department plans to ensure the limited vaccine is distributed to the highest priority populations in a timely manner. The department has been working with a number of stakeholders within and outside the Wolf Administration, including county and municipal health departments, federally qualified health centers, educators,

pharmacists, physicians and the Veterans Administration in preparation for vaccine distribution.

A vaccine that it is important to get every year, but particularly this year, is the seasonal flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is available now and is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones. Getting the flu vaccine, even if you do get the flu, will reduce the duration and severity of symptoms. Reducing the severity of the flu is very important as we work to ensure our health care system is not overwhelmed as we see flu and COVID-19 cases occur at the same time.

In addition to getting vaccinated, Pennsylvanians are encouraged to practice healthy habits like covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, frequently washing your hands and remembering to disinfect commonly touched objects, such as door knobs, light switches, countertops, cell phones and computers.

So far this flu season, which began on September 26, [17 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have been reported to the department](#). Those cases have occurred in 10 counties across the state. Flu activity and hospitalizations for influenza-like illness both continue to be low.

For the latest information for individuals, families, businesses and schools, visit “Responding to COVID-19” on [pa.gov](#).

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) by searching for “covid alert pa.”

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state’s lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)

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