



Novel Coronavirus/COVID-2019

March 13, 2020

COVID-19 UPDATE from Hays County Epidemiologist Eric Schneider

Health officials worldwide continue to gather information about COVID-19, which is a newly discovered strain of the Coronavirus. Additional travel restrictions implemented by the federal government will help limit the spread of the disease into our communities. Hays County continues to work closely with our cities, hospitals, and local organizations to coordinate information and provide resources.

Note that some courts in Hays County have canceled or altered Court dates, but some non-jury dockets could be held. Potential jurors are reminded to check the websites or call the juror information line for the specific court to which they were summoned. Hays County court information is under the Courts dropdown tab at <https://hayscountytexas.com/>.

Hays County Local Health Department has recommendations that every individual, business, and organization of any size can adopt to help protect all residents of Hays County. We want residents to remain alert, not anxious. Normal precautions used to help prevent the spread of influenza will just as effectively combat coronaviruses. Self-implemented social isolation when feeling ill, washing of hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, and covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue that you then throw away or the inside of your elbow are the strongest weapons we have at this moment to prevent the spread of this virus. People who are immunocompromised, the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions are the ones that are at the highest risk.

The number of cases reported in Texas continues to rise daily. While none of these cases are in Hays County, we do expect to eventually have residents test positive for COVID-19. Two patients under observation or treatment in Austin did not contract the virus there.

The majority of patients will have mild symptoms of a low-grade fever and a cough with chest congestion. These patients do not need to seek medical care or laboratory testing. Staying at home until you are fever-free for 48 hours, staying hydrated, and resting is the best way to defeat this virus. People who are over 65, have an underlying medical condition, or a weak immune system are the individuals that are most at risk of their symptoms becoming severe. These are the individuals we encourage to seek medical attention.

Hays County Local Health Department strongly encourages employers to strictly enforce, and possibly expand, their sick leave policies. Research shows that access to paid sick days for employees drastically lowers the rate

Office (512)393-5525 • Fax (512) 393-5530

401-A Broadway St. • San Marcos, TX 78666

¹ Policies to Reduce Influenza in the Workplace:
Impact Assessments Using an Agent-Based Model



Hays County Local Health Department

at which coworkers infect each other with flu-like-illness, such as COVID-19. Persons working while sick can easily result in widespread COVID-19.

Individuals are encouraged to avoid large gatherings. This includes, but is not limited to concerts, plays, sporting events, gymnasiums, dances, and restaurants. Recreation activities that can be practiced in private are encouraged. This virus spreads by person-to-person transmission just like the flu, so limiting human contact can prevent COVID-19 from spreading throughout our community.

Additional information is available on the [Hays County website](#), the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#), and from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) which offers information in Spanish and Chinese as well as English. Hays County residents can email the Local Health Department at hayslocalhealth@co.hays.tx.us.

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