

[View as Webpage](#)**COOK COUNTY
HEALTH**

SYSTEM NEWS

November 2020 - COVID 19 Special Edition

Letter from the CEO

Dear Cook County Health Friends and Partners,

We are in a critical time period in our fight against COVID-19. On November 19, Illinois surpassed a grim milestone of 11,000 COVID deaths. Across the country, the number of cases is rising at a faster rate than the first surge in March and meanwhile, we have seen the first U.S. cases of individuals who have COVID-19 and the flu at the same time. This has increased hospitalizations to a level that will soon lead to shortage of hospital beds.

COVID fatigue is understandable, but the disease does not care how tired we are. It will continue to spread indiscriminately, but particularly in our Black and Brown communities, who have been disproportionately impacted by the virus. In Cook County, Hispanics have been infected with COVID-19 at a higher rate than any other ethnic group, while African Americans have been most likely to be hospitalized.



Fighting a pandemic requires us to think less about “me” and more about “we.” Everyone’s actions during this time – going to parties, choosing not to wear a mask, not quarantining after traveling – can impact countless others including essential workers who are ensuring we receive the essential services and products we need, particularly when the virus is being spread by asymptomatic people.

The belief that COVID-19 only affects those who are considered in the higher risk category, like those with chronic health conditions, your grandparents or your parents, or those in black and brown communities only is just not true. We are seeing more positive COVID-19 cases in all groups, including more cases amongst 30-to 50-year-olds. The decisions we all make individually and collectively can result in serious consequences – even death – with respect to the spread of COVID-19.

In the spring, Illinois citizens made major sacrifices to help flatten the curve and avoid overwhelming hospital resources and it worked. We flattened the curve. This was done by following the recommended suggestions of wearing a mask, maintaining physical distance, cleaning our hands and staying at home.

Today, these simple yet effective tools remain our best bet in this fight, but COVID-19 fatigue seems to be resulting in people being lax, particularly when it comes to family and social gatherings. While we are all eager to visit family and friends for the upcoming holidays, this is not the year to do so. Think about new and different ways to celebrate the holidays that will not pose risk to your loved ones. It is important to keep in mind that even small gatherings pose significant risk, and there have been multiple high-profile incidences of family spread at indoor gatherings.

Every day, health care employees are coming to work dedicated to saving lives during a deadly pandemic. All they ask in return is for everyone to follow the basic guidance to slow the spread among health care workers who are desperately needed to care for those who have the most serious COVID-19 symptoms.

This special edition of the community newsletter will provide you the latest updates on COVID-19 from Cook County Health, the Cook County Department of Public Health and from our partners.

If you take away anything from the newsletter, it should be the following:

- Continue to follow all guidance for slowing the spread of COVID-19 – avoid in-person group or large family gatherings, maintain physical distance, wash your hands, wear a mask when outside your home or unable to maintain 6-feet of distance
- Get a flu shot as soon as possible
- Stay at home except for emergent items, such as doctor’s visits, medication refills and postpone nonessential activities
- Keep up to date with the latest information on social media from the Cook County Department of Public Health, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Cook County Health.

Thank you. We appreciate everyone joining our efforts to slow the spread. The battle continues and now is not the time to let our guard down.

Sincerely,

Illinois to Begin New Mitigation Efforts

Stay-at-home Advisory Issued for Suburban Cook County, Chicago

On November 17, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker announced Illinois will return to **Tier 3 mitigations** beginning November 20. These mitigations include guidance for the following settings and industries:

- Retail
- Personal Car Services
- Health and Fitness Centers
- Hotels
- Manufacturing
- Bars and Restaurants
- Meetings and Social Events
- Offices
- Organized Group Recreational Activities
- Indoor Recreation, Theater, Cultural Institutions

As they have since the start of COVID-19, grocery stores across the state will remain open and available. Child care facilities may continue to operate subject to guidelines from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. School districts and officials will continue to follow the extensive guidance released by the Illinois State Board of Education in August.

While Tier 3 does not include a stay-at-home order, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and the Chicago Department of Public Health have both issued stay-at-home advisories.

This stay-at-home advisory guidance is in alignment with the State of Illinois, and in accordance with public health science. It went into effect November 16 and will last at least 30 days.

STAY HOME. As much as possible, please refrain from any non-essential activities and stay home. If you must go out for essential activities, such as work, to attend school, to get tested for COVID-19, to get a flu shot, or to shop for groceries:

- Wear a mask consistently and correctly over your nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with others and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others who do not live with you.
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water.

LIMIT GATHERINGS. As much as possible, please refrain from attending or hosting gatherings with people who do not live in your household. This includes recommendations to postpone holiday gatherings or host virtual celebrations to limit the spread of COVID-19.

LIMIT TRAVEL. As much as possible, do not engage in any non-essential travel, including vacations or trips to visit relatives or friends.

WORK FROM HOME. As much as possible, CCDPH is calling on employers in suburban Cook County to re-establish telework protocols for staff who are able to work from home.

"Now more than ever, we must come together to stay apart," said Dr. Rachel Rubin, CCDPH Senior Medical Officer and Co-Lead. "We know limiting gatherings with friends and family can be hard, but we also know that virtual celebrations will save lives."

For the latest guidance from the Cook County Department of Public Health, click [here](#).

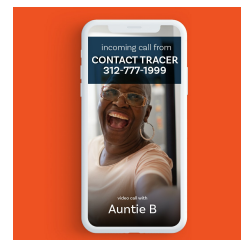
The latest on **increased mitigations for the City of Chicago** can be found [here](#).

Cook County Department of Public Health Launches Campaign to Improve Understanding of Contact Tracing

Cook County Department of Public Health's "Answer the Call" contact tracing campaign launched on November 10.

This campaign is designed to raise awareness about the important role contact tracing plays in helping to slow the spread of COVID-19. Ads will promote "Slow the spread. Answer the call." and include the phone number (312-777-1999) associated with the health department's contact tracing program.

Ads will be run in English and Spanish on Snapchat, Instagram, Google, YouTube, as well as radio and digital billboards.



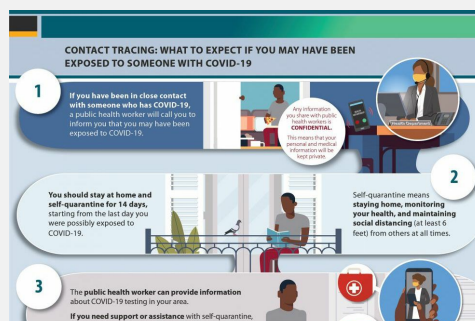
Information about Contact Tracing

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is the multi-step process of identifying, assessing and managing people exposed to a positive COVID-19 case and connecting exposed people to resources to assist them during quarantine. It is not new and is routinely used to prevent the further spread of communicable diseases.

How does it work?

Contact tracers use clear protocols to notify, interview and advise **close contacts** of



patients with confirmed or probable COVID-19.

Click on the image to view the step-by-step process.

Who is doing contact tracing in Cook County?

In June, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) announced it received almost \$41 million in COVID-19 federal relief funding from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). With the grant funding, CCDPH will expand its contact tracing workforce to 400 people.

The health department has conducted 500 interviews and has brought on 75 people. We expect the remaining groups to be on-boarded, trained and deployed by the end of year.



Q&A with Rocio Arellano, Case Investigator for the Cook County Department of Public Health's Contact Tracing Initiative

Rocio Arellano is a case investigator for the Cook County Department of Public Health's Contact Tracing Initiative. The Beverly native has worked in the medical field for more than 15 years in various roles, including as a patient tech and case manager.

When the pandemic started, Rocio saw firsthand how people didn't understand how the virus worked. As a medical professional, she knew the important role contact tracing would have in slowing the spread of the virus. She currently leads a team of six who reach out to individuals with COVID-19 and find out who they have been in contact with to urge them to get tested.

What is the role of a case investigator?

As a case investigator, I am responsible for contacting individuals who have tested positive because we need to get the names of people they have come into contact with. Then our contact tracers reach out to individuals who have come into contact with known positive cases and they find out how they are feeling and urge them to get tested.

What is your biggest challenge?

I think the lack of understanding about the process and what we do is our biggest challenge. Once you are able to explain to people what contact tracing is, why it's important and how it can help them, people are more willing to be honest and be a part of the process.

Talk about the importance of being bilingual in this role.

Most of the households I reach out to are Spanish-speaking. It's rare that someone completely understands the process so being able to speak with them in their native language is critical. So is understanding the family structure and issues that communities face.

Things can get lost when they are translated, so it's very important that we speak in the language they are comfortable with and to build that trust. I always try to find something we have in common to find ways to relate to each other and build a connection.

What are some things you discuss with people?

Besides finding out how they are feeling, we talk about other people they've been around and ask them to discuss contact tracing with those individuals. It's much easier to call someone and get them to be honest with us if they know we are calling.

But they are always surprised that we can provide them with information about resources. So many people will continue working even with COVID because they are afraid of losing their job. But then we tell them there are resources out there that can help them so they can stay home and help slow the spread.

By educating people, I think it's making a huge difference. When we finish, they are grateful for what we are doing. It's a rewarding thing.



Q&A with Xandria Hair, Director of Community Mobilization with the Cook County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Contact Tracing Initiative

Xandria Hair has years of experience working in community outreach and public health, both with Chicago Public Schools and Cook County Health. In her most recent role with the health system, she served as a community outreach worker, providing a communications bridge between the system and the communities being served.

Born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, Xandria is looking to use her work with community organizations to ensure suburban Cook County residents have access to testing and are communicating with contact tracers.

Talk about your role within the Contact Tracing Initiative.

Our main goal is to build capacity around contact tracing. In late summer, we put out an RFP to engage community organizations and ensure residents have a say in our approach to public health issues, particularly COVID-19.

It's a shared power. We don't pretend to be a know-all entity in relating to each community because they are all different. Even ones who are close in proximity can have very different needs, so we want to make sure that there is a shared sense of power as we increase testing and work on communicating with residents.

How does your own personal history impact you in this role?

The biggest thing that attracted me to the position was my own lived experience. I know what it's like not to have access to the basic, everyday things that help people. I want to make sure that health equity is accessible to everyone, especially during a pandemic.



How is the Contract Tracing Initiative working with community organizations?
CCDPH has been allocated nearly \$41 million by the Illinois Department of Public Health as part of the COVID-19 Local Health Department Contact Tracing Grant.

The program understands the importance and value of incorporating community-based organizations (CBOs) to share COVID-19 information and resources to communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Over \$5 million has been awarded to CBOs across suburban Cook County to implement activities (to begin December 1, 2020, and span six months) that will aid in the effectiveness of the CCDPH COVID-19 contract tracing program by slowing the spread of COVID-19 and lessening the social economic impacts.

Through funding awarded by CCDPH, CBOs can provide COVID-19 outreach and education, expand existing services, or build up COVID-19 testing. The CBOs will participate in Equity Labs, Regional Learning & Action Networks, and Peer Learning designed to help foster relationships, increase their knowledge, skills, and learn/share timely COVID-19 information while engaging in active informed and problem-based learning.

Hospital and Clinic Updates from Cook County Health

Cook County Health continues to take steps to ensure the health and safety of our patients and staff, and is working closely with local and state agencies, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and our own Cook County Department of Public Health.

Update on Elective Surgeries and Telehealth Visits

Effective November 16, 2020, all elective procedures requiring an inpatient stay have been postponed. Outpatient clinics, including specialty clinics, will be open for urgent care and clinically necessary in-person visits. All other visits will move to telehealth.

Universal Masking

All patients and staff receive a mask when they enter Cook County Health hospitals and clinics and are required to wear them.

Your mask should cover your nose and your mouth and rest under your chin. It should not be hanging around your neck or arm or under your nose. Avoid touching the mask while using it. To remove the mask, remove it from behind the ears and do not touch the front of the mask.

Visitor Restrictions

To protect our patients and staff, visitors are not permitted at Cook County Health locations at this time.

We ask individuals who are not sick and do not have an appointment to stay home. All patients and approved visitors must always wear a mask.

Accessing Cook County Health Locations

John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital Open Entrances:

- Main Campus Parking Garage
- Emergency Department
- Stroger Entrance 2 (main entrance off Harrison)
- Professional Building at Polk Street

Provident Hospital Open Entrances:

- Main Entrance
- Emergency Department
- Main garage (entrance located off Forrestville Ave.) is available for parking.

What to Do if You Feel Sick

If you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, or you have lost your sense of smell or feel like you have the flu, call your provider or the hospital for directions on where to go to be screened and tested.



ATTENTION

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS
THAT MAKE PEOPLE SICK:

Respiratory illnesses like COVID-19, flu and colds are spread from person to person. Help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and flu. Protect others from getting your germs by:



1. **Wearing** a mask and **standing** six feet apart.



2. **Covering** your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it away in the trash.



3. **Washing** your hands frequently. Keeping your hands clean is the number one thing you can do to avoid spreading germs. **Cleaning** your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.



4. **Avoiding** touching your eyes, nose and throat.



5. **Cleaning** and **disinfecting** frequently touched objects and surfaces.



6. **Avoiding** close contact with people who are sick.



7. **Not sharing** eating utensils, drinking cups, water bottles, towels or other personal items including lip balm, lipstick or toothbrushes.



8. **Staying** home when you are sick except to get medical care.



COOK COUNTY
HEALTH

cookcountyhealth.org

11-22

Study Suggests Mild to Moderate COVID-19 Patients Who Receive the Eli Lilly Antibody May Experience Better Clinical Outcomes

Initial Results from the BLAZE-1 Trial Published in the New England Journal of Medicine

Results from a study led by Infectious Disease experts from Cook County Health indicate that outpatients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who received the Eli Lilly antibody drug therapy called LY-CoV555 may have experienced better clinical outcomes than patients who received the placebo.

Called the BLAZE-1 study, the phase II, randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled

outpatient trial enrolled 452 participants. Results from the study were published in the October 29 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Cook County Health was one of 24 academic medical institutions across the U.S. and one of only two in Illinois to lead the trial.

The antibody known as LY-CoV555 was derived from one of the first U.S. patients to survive COVID-19. Study participants were given a one-time intravenous infusion of the medication LY-CoV555 of either 700mg, 2,800mg or 7,000mg, or a placebo. At Cook County Health, study participants enrolled in the trial were predominately LatinX and African American.

Study participants who received the monoclonal therapy experienced fewer hospitalizations and ER visits compared to those who only received the placebo. The severity of symptoms in patients who received the drug therapy improved on days 2-6 with the acceleration of the virus resolving by day 3.

“Our hope has been that the antibody drug will reduce COVID symptoms quickly after diagnosis and help to eradicate the virus more quickly,” said Dr. Gregory Huhn, an infectious disease physician for Cook County Health and principal site investigator of the BLAZE-1 study.

Dr. Huhn who is also a co-author of the recently published article in the *NEJM* said, “While a vaccine is still likely necessary to generate overall population protective immunity, this drug therapy has the potential to deliver favorable clinical outcomes and prevent complications of COVID-19.”

According to Dr. Huhn, the expansion of the BLAZE-1 study will include higher-risk individuals such as individuals over 65 or those with diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular, autoimmune and kidney diseases. The study will also expand to adolescents.

Eli Lilly and Company, the maker of the antibody medicine LY-CoV555, sponsored the study.

Frequently Asked Questions about Wearing a Mask

With Dr. Sharon Welbel, director of hospital epidemiology and infection control at Cook County Health, and Onafre Donceras, nurse epidemiologist

Who should wear a mask?

CDC recommends all people 2 years of age and older wear a mask outside the home and when around people who do not live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

When should we wear masks?

People should wear masks in public settings, when around people not living in their own household, and when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Masks may slow the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have symptoms and do not know that they are infected. That's why it's important for everyone to practice social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from other people) and wear masks outside the home.

How do masks help people?

Masks provide an extra layer to help prevent the respiratory droplets from traveling in the air and onto other people.

Can wearing a mask for long periods of time make you sick?

There is no scientific evidence that mask wearing or physical distancing weakens the immune system. Masks are designed to be breathed through and there is no evidence that low oxygen levels occur when worn for periods of time. People with preexisting lung problems should discuss mask-wearing concerns with their health care providers.

What's the proper way to wear them/put them on/take them off?

To put on and properly wear a mask

- Clean your hands
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- CDC does not recommend the use of masks with an exhalation valve as the virus can escape via the valve
- **Don't** put the mask around your neck or up on your forehead
- **Don't** touch the mask, and, if you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect

To take off your mask

- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Place mask in the washing machine (learn more about [how to wash masks](#)) if it is a cloth or washable mask
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing

Cook County Department of Public Health Partners with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois for Free Flu Shots

The impact of COVID-19 on our operations has been great and now we face the possibility of a “twindemic,” with COVID-19 and the flu season happening simultaneously.

Getting a flu vaccine this fall can reduce your risk of getting flu and help save medical resources needed to care for people with COVID-19. It's important for everyone to do their part to stay healthy this flu season. Prevent the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19, and remember to:

- Mask Up: Cover your nose and mouth with a mask when out in public.
- Lather Up: Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Sleeve Up: Roll up your sleeve to get a flu shot.



**SPREAD
FACTS,
NOT FLU.
GET YOUR
SHOT**



The more people vaccinated against flu, the more people protected from flu and the more resources available to care for individuals with COVID-19. The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) has partnered with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBS-IL) Care Van to offer **FREE** mobile seasonal influenza (flu) vaccination clinics throughout suburban Cook County. Visit spreadfactsnotflu.com for more information about locations and times.

SPREADFACTSNOTFLU.COM

To find alternative locations to get a flu shot visit vaccinefinder.org.

Cook County COVID-19 Recovery Programs

For Businesses

- [Job Training and Placement Program](#)
- [Manufacturing Concierge Program](#)
- [Small Business Assistance Program](#)
- [Technical Assistance Program](#)

For Individuals

- [Food Security Program](#)
- [Housing Stability Assistance Program](#)
- [Utility Assistance Program](#)

Get the latest COVID-19 Info

For the latest Cook County COVID-19 updates, text "AlertCook" to 888-777. You can also call the **Cook County Department of Public Health** hotline at 708-836-4755 or email ccdph.covid19@cookcountyhhs.org.

CCDPH has also launched a website for residents to view COVID-19 case counts by suburban municipality. Click here to visit [the site](#). You can view the breakdown in cases by age, sex, race/ethnicity and severity.

Other Sources for Information

Illinois Department of Public Health

- Call 800-889-3931
- Email DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV

Chicago Department of Public Health (City of Chicago residents)

- Call 312-746-4835
- Email coronavirus@chicago.gov

COVID-19 Testing: What You Need to Know

Where should someone go for testing?

A variety of places offer walk-in and drive-thru (or mobile) testing for COVID-19. These include:

- Primary care providers – contact your primary care provider
- **Cook County Health** – testing for CCH patients with a doctor's order. Your provider will direct you to testing.
- Pharmacies, such as **CVS** and **Walgreens** – visit websites for more information
- IDPH Mobile **Testing Sites** open to all regardless of symptoms
- IDPH Community-Based **Testing Sites** open to all regardless of symptoms

Please note that many sites require an appointment.

What kind of tests are there?

There are two kinds of COVID-19 tests:

- Diagnostic tests detect the virus and tells you if you have a current infection. There are two types of diagnostic tests: **molecular** tests, such as RT-PCR tests, that detect the virus's genetic material, and **antigen** tests that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus.
- Antibody test which might tell you if you had a past infection

Who should get tested?

You can use the [CDC Self-Checker Tool](#) to help you decide whether to get tested.

What do I do after I get tested?

Stay home and avoid contact with others until you get your test result.

If you test positive for COVID-19, know what protective steps to take if you are sick:

- Most people have mild COVID-19 illness and can recover at home without medical care.
- Contact your healthcare provider if your symptoms are getting worse or if you have questions about your health

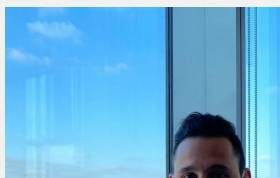
If you test negative for COVID-19, you likely were not infected at the time your sample was collected. This does not mean you will not get COVID-19:

- A negative test result only means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing or that your sample was collected too early in your infection.
- You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and then get infected and spread the virus to others.
- If you have symptoms later, you may need another test to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

How much will it cost?

All COVID-19 testing and related services must be free of charge to Illinois residents, regardless of insurance or immigration status. Read more from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services [here](#).

For tips on what situations will trigger a surprise medical bill, and what do to if you receive one, please see: <https://www.consumerreports.org/coronavirus/how-free-coronavirus-testing-has-become-new-surprise-medical-bill/>.



Advice for the Holidays

"I think the thing you can do to give thanks for your family is to stay away from them."

– Dr. Michael Alebich, Cook County Health



hospitalist, on what families should do for Thanksgiving.

Cook County Health in the News

BECKER'S
HOSPITAL REVIEW

Cook County Health to add 466 positions for contact tracing



Chicago hospitals seeing double number of COVID-19 patients in ICU, health officials 'better prepared' for 2nd surge



Doctor says they too have COVID-fatigue, but people need to continue wearing masks, maintaining distance

Chicago Tribune

Antibody drug tested in Cook County may be helpful to some COVID-19 patients, results show



Cook County Health Seeks Participants for COVID-19 Experimental Drug Clinical Trial

Cook County Health Department: Restaurants prove to be the most visited place by those who have gotten COVID

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Sheriff Dart warns second wave of COVID cases threatens efforts to contain virus inside jail



FDA Approves Emergency Use Of Monoclonal Antibody Therapy For COVID-19: Doctors Explain How It Works

Visit our website at [cookcountyhealth.org](https://www.cookcountyhealth.org)

If you would like to invite a representative from CCH to attend a community event, please send an email to events@cookcountyhhs.org.

To provide feedback on CCH Community News, update your contact information, or unsubscribe, please email Marcelino Garcia, Director of Community Affairs, at mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org.