

# Surgeon general, speaking on Fort Bragg, says flu is bigger risk than coronavirus

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Dr. Jerome Adams spoke at Fort Bragg during a program sponsored by Womack Army Medical Center.

Americans should be more concerned about the flu than the coronavirus, the nation's top doctor said Tuesday.

Dr. Jerome Adams, surgeon general of the United States, spoke at Fort Bragg during a program sponsored by Womack Army Medical Center. He also talked about how to deal with the opioid crisis.

After his speech, Adams discussed the coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement released Monday that it is closely monitoring the outbreak of coronavirus, which was first detected in China and continues to expand. The respiratory illness is similar to MERS and SARS, CDC says.

Adams said Tuesday that the Department of Health and Human Services is taking the virus seriously, but he warned about a more widely known illness.

"Flu is a much bigger risk to the average person," he said.

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Adams said 54 people in North Carolina have died from the flu this season.

“There hasn’t been a single coronavirus case (in the state),” he said. “The nearest coronavirus case is 12 hours away in Boston, Massachusetts.”

Adams said that as of Tuesday morning, there have been 11 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States. All those people either have been in the part of China where the virus has been most widely detected or in close contact with people who have been there, he said.

“The fact is, at least right now, the risk of coronavirus is low to most people in the U.S., including people in North Carolina,” he said. “You’re more likely to get, to be hospitalized or to die from the flu than the coronavirus.”

When asked about the risk of coronavirus to deployed soldiers, Adams said military officials are looking at the situation in different areas of the world and will take all measures necessary to protect the troops.

“We are carefully following the spread of this disease globally so we understand which areas of the world are most at risk,” he said. “Right now, the United States is at low-risk, and our soldiers are getting everything they need to make sure they’re safe.”

Adams said protecting against the flu also will help in efforts against coronavirus.

“We don’t want undifferentiated flu confusing our health professionals when we’re trying to evaluate people who may have coronavirus,” he said. “Flu is more likely to affect you, and we know how to protect ourselves against that.”

Adams encouraged residents to wash their hands, stay at home when they’re sick and get a flu shot.

“As surgeon general, I’m telling folks the number one way to protect ourselves is to get a flu shot,” he said.

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