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Mayor de Blasio and NYC Health + Hospitals Expand Appointment-Only COVID-19 Testing Capacity

March 19, 2020

New Yorkers should text COVID to 692-692 to get regular updates on the latest developments regarding COVID-19; Text COVIDESP to 692-692 for updates in Spanish

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio and NYC Health + Hospitals today announced expanded, appointment-only COVID-19 testing capacity across 10 acute-care hospitals, seven Gotham Health community-based health centers, and 4 drive-thru test sites.

Citywide, there are 3,615 positive cases of COVID-19 and 22 fatalities. Currently, there are 980 cases in Queens, 976 in Manhattan, 1030 in Brooklyn, 436 in the Bronx, and 165 in Staten Island.

As of 5PM on March 18th, there were 554 people hospitalized with 169 of those people in the ICU.

“If we’re going to curb this epidemic, we need fast and expansive testing for those most at risk for serious illness,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Now we can get more New Yorkers the care they need at the right time—helping save lives, one test at a time.”

The expanded testing capacity—available by appointment only—will help keep people seeking testing out of emergency departments and ensure testing access for New Yorkers with moderate-to-severe symptoms. Those with mild illness, who are not above the age of 50 or have underlying health conditions, should continue to stay home, practice social distancing, and consult their health care provider if their symptoms do not subside in 3-4 days.

Eight of the ten acute care “assessment and testing” centers at NYC Health + Hospitals are now open on an appointment-only basis, including H+H/Bellevue, H+H/Elmhurst, H+H/Harlem, H+H/Metropolitan, H+H/Kings County, H+H/Lincoln, H+H/Woodhull, and H+H/Queens. Assessment and testing centers at H+H/Coney Island and H+H/Jacobi will be live early next week. These tents are similar to those utilized during the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. One drive thru testing site, H+H/Jacobi, is currently operational; H+H/Coney Island becomes operational this Friday. Two remaining sites – H+H/Jacobi and H+H/Kings County – will be coming online next week.

Patients with appointments will receive an expedited consultation with a primary care physician to capture their medical history before their sample is collected for testing. This will ensure that the appropriate medical treatment is provided should a test come back positive. Samples collected by NYC Health + Hospitals will be sent to BioReference Laboratory for testing.

With this expansion of assessment and testing centers, H+H anticipates serving 150 people per day at each of its 10 centers and between 50-75 people per day at each of their 7 Gotham clinics by appointment only. The four drive thru sites will be able to accommodate 100 people per day by appointment only at their respective locations in addition to the State-operated mobile drive-thru facility on Staten Island.

New Yorkers who have high priority because of age, pre-existing conditions and symptoms, call 1-844-NYC-4NYC for more information. New Yorkers can continue to call 311 to be assessed for risk for COVID.

On Tuesday, Mayor de Blasio announced a private-public partnership between the City's public health system and BioReference that would increase testing capacity to 5,000 per day, with a one-to-two day turnaround for results. All COVID-19 testing is being provided at no cost. These efforts expand on earlier activation of the public health system's surge management plan to build capacity.

New Guidance for Workers

The City will continue to urge private sector companies to adopt telecommuting practices.

To prevent further spread of COVID-19 the City will enforce State restrictions mandating that no business have more than 25 percent of their workforce report into the office.

Older New Yorkers with preexisting conditions should stay home as they see necessary. If your employer does not permit telecommuting, please call 311 for assistance.

Keeping Businesses Closed

NYPD, FDNY, DOB, and the Sheriff's Office will enforce the City's closure of entertainment venues, including movie theatres, museums, cinemas, clubs, and concert venues, and commercial gyms. The same enforcement actions will apply to the limitations placed on restaurants, bars, cafes, and catering halls to pick up and delivery food service only.

So far, the City has inspected 8,150 businesses and religious institutions and has observed overwhelming compliance. Six violations have been issues.

Update on Healthcare Worker Recruitment

After the announcement of nyc.gov/helpnwnyc, over 1,500 medical providers have signed up to aid the City's response efforts to COVID-19.

Assistance for Section 8 Recipients

In order to ensure New Yorkers who use Section 8 rental assistance vouchers have uninterrupted access to housing, we are taking the following steps to strengthen housing stability:

- The City will automatically extend any Section 8 voucher set to expire. Voucher holders do not need to reach out to the City for an extension.
- All subsidy terminations that are in process are suspended until further notice.
- Any HPD Section 8 voucher holders facing rent hardships due to decreases in income should contact HPD.
- NYCHA encourages households experiencing a loss of income to visit the NYCHA Self-Service Portal.

The HPD Section 8 Customer Service Office at 100 Gold Street is closed until at least March 30th, but the HPD Section 8 team is still available to the public. New Yorkers should email DTRAI@hpd.nyc.gov or fax at 212-863-5299 for assistance.

Over 680,000 New Yorkers have signed up for the City's COVID text notification system to get regular updates on the latest developments with coronavirus in New York City text COVID to 692-692. New Yorkers can text COVIDESP to 692-692 for updates in Spanish. You will receive regular SMS texts with the latest news and developments. If you have any questions on finding medical care call 311.

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