



## GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

# Ministry of Health - COVID-19 Update

Saturday, April 11th, 2020



Good Day Members of the Media,

Please find the below statement from the Minister of Health the Hon. Kim Wilson JP MP regarding COVID-19.

"Between Good Friday and today, Saturday 11th April, the Ministry received 47 new test results; 45 were negative, and two were positive. Of the two new positives, one was an imported case and one was a contact of a previously confirmed case. We count our blessings that there have been no further COVID-19 related deaths.

Bermuda's total confirmed positive cases stands at 50; 28 have now recovered, eight persons are hospitalized, and there are 10 persons that are under active public health monitoring, but who do not require hospitalization. However, the good news is that three persons who were previously hospitalized, have now been discharged from hospital, giving us all hope that recovery can be possible.

The age of persons hospitalized ranges between 58 and 78 years, and the average age is 68. The average age of all of our confirmed positive cases is 50. The median age is 48, and the age range of all of our positive cases is

from 18 to 83 years.

Out of the 50 positive cases confirmed to date, 28 are males, and 22 are females. A review of our overall testing numbers show that to date, out of the 401 tests which have been conducted 50 were positive, and 351 were negative.

With the sad news this week of Bermuda's first COVID-19 related deaths, it is more important than ever that we do everything in our power to protect our most vulnerable populations, of which perhaps the most at-risk are the residents of our island's long-term care facilities.

To this end, I'm pleased to say that today we are amending Bermuda's Residential Care and Nursing Homes Regulations to prevent employees from working at more than one site where there is a risk of communicable disease spread. We hope this will further safeguard our residents from COVID-19 by eliminating any potential transfer of the disease among the different long-term care homes by unknowing staff members.

Further, the country's testing capacity will continue to prioritize rest homes and other high risk persons.

Additionally, I can confirm that today a thorough deep cleaning commenced of several of our long-term care facilities.

As the public may recall, more than three weeks ago, I announced that visits to long-term care facilities by members of the public would be restricted to end of life care visits only and that these visitors would be screened before they enter the facility.

In an effort to further limit foot traffic in and out of the care homes, I can report that this week care homes were provided with tablets from the Bermuda Community Foundation for telehealth, compliance monitoring and education calls.

I want to thank the teams dedicated to protecting our long-term care residents since this crisis began to unfold. They have been following international best practice and guidance regarding COVID-19 a full two months before Bermuda even had its first case. Administrators from the various care homes have been meeting regularly with public health officials who have provided continued guidance as well as emotional support to care home staff on a regular basis.

Care home administrators underwent COVID-19 preparedness training in early March to ensure that prevention measures were being taken to stop respiratory germs from entering the facilities and from spreading within the facilities. In mid-March, monitoring of all care homes commenced through daily telephone calls from Ministry staff to each facility and daily reports were produced reflecting the responses, concerns and most pressing needs. This has now been replaced by an electronic form and reporting system.

I would also like to thank the K. Margaret Carter Centre for providing their buses and drivers to transport caregivers to their place of work in one of Bermuda's 21 care home facilities.

On a negative point, it came to my attention yesterday that individuals are circulating sensitive information regarding their elders who reside in care homes, specifically their COVID-19 status. This was really disheartening to hear as these residents have the right to have their privacy and dignity respected at all times. Their health condition is confidential. Our elders, though they may be our family, have rights too. These rights

are to be respected. In fact, this standard of privacy, dignity and respect is highlighted in The Code of Practice for Care Homes which state that care home recipients must be treated with “*dignity, consideration and respect in a manner that fully recognizes their individuality, independence and right to privacy*” and that arrangements must be in place to “*ensure that the care recipient’s independence, privacy and dignity are respected at all times.*”

Section 1.6, specially, states: “*Policies are in place to ensure confidential information about care recipients is treated appropriately which include:*

- a. Staff share confidential information when it is needed for the safe and effective care of an individual.*
- b. When confidential information is shared it must be relevant, necessary and proportionate.*
- c. Information shared for the benefit of the community is anonymized (unless there is a legal obligation to disclose).*
- d. Any individual who objects to the sharing of their confidential information is respected, unless there is a legal obligation to do so.”*

Additionally, the right of an individual to be treated with “*dignity, consideration and respect in a manner that fully recognizes their individuality, independence and right to privacy*” is also enshrined in Bermuda’s Bill of Rights, along with their right to “*have their personal and clinical information held in confidence and not disclosed without the appropriate consent, unless in emergency circumstances.*”

And, finally, I wish to give thanks to St. John Ambulance, who have been helping the Ministry of Health and, indeed, the entire island, throughout this pandemic.

Particularly, I want to thank them for providing transport for persons in the community with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and for whom urgent transport via Emergency Medical Service services is not required. Specifically, this refers to either persons without means to safely transport from their residence or the quarantine station to the COVID-19 testing center; or persons requiring transport from their residence to a quarantine station for isolation.

I want to thank the majority of our residents for adhering to the sheltering in place guidelines and also to urge those who may not be as compliant to please remember that what may be a minor inconvenience for you, may be saving the life of your neighbor, grandmother, friend, or even your own. Stay inside and stay safe, Bermuda.”

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