



# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

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Dear Wisconsinites:

I wanted to reach out to you today to give you an update on COVID-19 (formerly called the novel coronavirus). COVID-19 is a virus that has not previously infected humans and information about its rate of spread and its effects is still largely unknown, which makes it incredibly important to be highly cautious in dealing with the current situation. Given this, I wanted to give you an update on the work we've been doing so far, the current status of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, and the steps we are taking to keep families and communities safe.

As of today, there have been six people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in Wisconsin. One of these individuals has already recovered. The Department of Health Services (DHS), my administration, and I are taking this issue very seriously, and are continuing to take precautions across Wisconsin. We have also been working with partners at the local and federal levels to provide the most accurate, up-to-date information as possible. The information in this email is current as of this morning, March 12, 2020, but please know that as this is a rapidly evolving situation, there will continue to be updates and changes. You can also find the most current information on the [DHS website](#), which has guidance that is updated regularly for travel, self-quarantine, and school districts, among other important information.

Earlier this month, I directed the DHS to provide the public and legislators from across the state an informational briefing and give an update on the status of COVID-19. Over the past few weeks, the DHS has also hosted regular informational calls to provide updates to members of the media so we can ensure folks across our state are receiving the most current information we have available. I have also participated in discussions with Vice President Mike Pence and senior administration officials to receive updates on the White House Coronavirus Task Force and to share how Wisconsin and other states are responding to COVID-19. I also know that addressing public health issues like COVID-19 requires collaboration and communication to ensure our efforts are efficient and effective. Members of my administration have been in regular contact with other elected officials and partners at the local, state, and federal levels, so we can work together on preventing and responding to COVID-19.

Making sure that folks have access to the healthcare resources, care, and treatment they need is critically important as we continue to work to manage the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. On March 6, Insurance Commissioner Mark Afable and I asked health plan issuers to help Wisconsinites access testing and treatment for COVID-19 and ensure that healthcare is as accessible as possible as we continue to monitor this situation.

We requested that health plan issuers waive cost-sharing for COVID-19-related laboratory testing and radiology services, prepare for increased demand for telehealth services, review readiness and responsiveness plans to new COVID-19 cases, and that health plan issuers cover the immunization for COVID-19—in the event that an immunization becomes available—at no cost-sharing for covered members. We also asked that health plan issuers be flexible on prescription drug supply limitations and early refill limitations so folks can get their medication as quickly as possible and without worrying about increased exposure or risk.

I have also been working with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin to help secure federal funding to support our efforts in responding to COVID-19 in Wisconsin. On March 11, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that Wisconsin will be receiving more than \$10.2 million to support our response and prevention efforts for COVID-19. My administration is working quickly to determine how to best allocate these resources toward prevention and response across our state.

On March 11, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. I know that folks across our state continue to be concerned about the current status of COVID-19 and the work we are doing to prevent further spread in Wisconsin. Earlier today I hosted a press conference to give an update to the people of our state about COVID-19 and I also signed Executive Order #72, which declares a public health emergency in Wisconsin. Executive Order #72 directs the DHS to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidents of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, and suspends any administrative rules that the DHS finds would increase the health threat or prevent, hinder, or delay our response to the COVID-19 emergency. It also directs the Adjutant General of the Wisconsin National Guard to assist in our response to the public health emergency. Additionally, the DHS also issued new guidance regarding mass gatherings, travel, and long-term care and assisted living facilities. Please see the [DHS website](#) for these updates. If you are interested in watching my press conference from earlier today, you can find the link on my Facebook page [here](#).

We encourage you, your family members, and friends and neighbors to take the necessary precautions and preparations in the event of any continued spread of COVID-19. You can find some additional information below from the CDC as you take these important steps to protect yourselves and your family members.

As we continue to receive updates on the status of COVID-19, my administration will be continuing to work to ensure folks and families across Wisconsin have the most accurate and current information. If you have additional questions, please call 608-266-1865 or 800-947-3529. Thank you again for reaching out to my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Evers  
Governor

## **GUIDANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

### **Preparing for COVID-19**

In the case of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently advises that common symptoms include flu-like symptoms (fever (100° F or higher), cough or sore throat, headache or body aches, and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting) or symptoms of respiratory illness (fever (100° F or higher), cough, and shortness of breath). In order to slow or stop the spread of these illnesses, it is critical to follow the below instructions, which is guidance from the CDC as of 3/11/2020.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
  - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 (at home or in a health care setting).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
  - For information about handwashing, see CDC's Handwashing website.
  - For information specific to healthcare providers, see CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings.