

27 March 2020

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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Contents

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U.S. MILITARY

- Coronavirus forces military to cut training, quarantine and shutter recruiting stations, creating strains
- Coronavirus Latest: 2 Department of the Army civilian employees at Aberdeen Proving Ground test positive for COVID-19
- Flooded hotlines, cancelled leave and isolation hits soldiers amid coronavirus pandemic
- Military warns of 'social breakdowns' in other countries facing coronavirus; US crisis could last months
- No blanket social distancing policy in the military, SECDEF says

GLOBAL

- Clinicians struggle with PPE shortages
- Coronavirus: Young people are not 'invincible', WHO warns
- FDA approves new coronavirus test that can have 'results within hours' instead of days
- We need to move faster to introduce new TB drugs
- What you need to know about the coronavirus right now
- Who should be saved first? Experts offer ethical guidance
- Why soap, sanitizer and warm water work against Covid-19 and other viruses

INFLUENZA

- CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report
- U.S. Army Public Health Center Army Influenza Activity Report
- WHO: Influenza Update

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Hong Kong records rise in foodborne outbreaks
- Spate of salad recalls in Australia due to Salmonella
- Two dozen more sick in E. coli outbreak traced to raw clover sprouts

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WELLNESS

- How 'muscle memory' may help keep us fit

USAFRICOM

- COVID-19 in Africa: Nigeria, South Africa

USCENTCOM

- Iran rejects 'foreign' help as virus death toll nears 2,000

USEUCOM

- Italy COVID-19 case count nears 60K, New ordinance on travel
- Spain COVID-19 cases near 30K, State of emergency extended

USINDOPACOM

- Coronavirus: Wuhan to ease lockdown as world battles pandemic
- Philippines COVID-19 cases top 300, more labs testing
- Sri Lanka COVID-19 and dengue updates

USNORTHCOM

- U.S.: California- Los Angeles COVID-19- More than 400 cases, 5 deaths
- U.S.: New York- Reports 4,800 additional COVID-19 cases, Army Corps of Engineers will begin construction on four temporary hospital sites

USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil reports coronavirus cases in all states, São Paulo hardest hit
- Venezuela: COVID-19 cases rise to 70, Cuban doctors arrive

Coronavirus forces military to cut training, quarantine and shutter recruiting stations, creating strains

20 March- The coronavirus pandemic is stressing the military's ability to keep its troops ready to fight as 124 service members, their families and civilian workers had contracted the disease as of Friday and the Pentagon seeks to halt its spread. The Pentagon has canceled or curtailed major war-training exercises, quarantined thousands of troops, closed recruiting centers and slapped limits on foreign and domestic travel. One former Pentagon official said the virus could degrade everything from maintenance of warplanes to troops' effectiveness in combat. Senior officials insist that the military remains ready to fight and win against any threat around the world. "I want to assure the American people that the United States military remains ready and capable of meeting all of our national security requirements," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said this month. Yet strains are evident: Training has been canceled or cut back. The Air Force scrapped Red Flag in Alaska, a training exercise for top-gun combat pilots, Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, told reporters Wednesday. The Army is altering operations at bases that prepare troops for combat to accommodate National Guard units needed in their states for relief operations. War games in Europe, Africa and at sea have been cut back or scrapped. At least 67 troops in the U.S. and abroad as of Friday have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. In Europe, 2,600 troops and civilian employees are quarantined as a precaution. The Army is shuttering its recruiting centers across the country, moving to online efforts only. It has also reduced the number of recruits in training centers by 50%, said Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff. Six recruits have shown possible symptoms, he said. Foreign and domestic travel for troops and their family members has been banned or severely restricted until mid-May. The cumulative effect of the illness, quarantines and missed training opportunities is difficult to calculate, experts and military officials say. But there is agreement that the disruption will have an impact on what the military refers to as its "readiness" to fight. [MSN](#)

[top of page...](#)

Coronavirus Latest: 2 Department of the Army civilian employees at Aberdeen Proving Ground test positive for COVID-19

24 March- Two Department of the Army civilians who work on Aberdeen Proving Ground tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently in isolation. One employee, who works in a secured facility at APG North, did not show symptoms but was tested because of their age, health and recent travel to New York. They had last been seen in their office on Monday, March 16. The department said most non-essential employees who worked in building 394 at APG North were placed on maximum telework status starting March 13. The building has

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**MEDCOM Guidance
for Risk Assessment
and Public Health
Management of
Healthcare Workers
with Potential
Exposure in a
Healthcare Setting
to Patients with
COVID-19**

This information paper provides U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Workers (HCWs) with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).



been cleared of all personnel that was left and has been vacant since March 20, and trace and cleaning procedures are set to begin in the next day or two. The second employee, who worked in building 6010, showed symptoms and was tested on March 18, but did not receive the positive test results until March 24. That person was last in the office March 13. All employees who may have been in contact with the second person have been in self-quarantine since March 18, none have shown any symptoms at this time, officials said. The majority of the contact areas in building 6010 have been cleaned. [CBS Baltimore](#)

[top of page...](#)

Flooded hotlines, cancelled leave and isolation hits soldiers amid coronavirus pandemic

20 March- Leave is cancelled, soldiers are quarantined, training is nixed and families are left in limbo as the Pentagon braces for the novel coronavirus. Though the measures are understandable—and even advisable—soldiers’ lives have been upended. The biggest impact hasn’t been from the invisible virus thus far, but instead from guidance designed to curtail its impact. Late last week, Pentagon officials placed severe restrictions on overseas and domestic travel, including those attempting to take leave before deployment and those moving on government orders. “I’m stuck here in Germany with no personal vehicle, no household goods, I have three kids, two dogs, a wife and I live off-post,” said one soldier who was supposed to move this month to Fort Rucker, Alabama. “And we’re still required to report every day for work unless we’re feeling ill.” Rental cars aren’t cheap for a family of five. And that expense would stack with the appraisal, home inspection fees and costs of applying for a mortgage that he and his wife lost on the house they were planning to close on next week. Two of his children are school-age, and though there’s talk of beginning online education, all their computers are currently at Fort Rucker. The soldier was moving to the post to begin warrant officer candidate school, but he’ll now be missing that class start date and was told he can’t simply be rolled to the next one. “I’ll have to wait anywhere from four to six months for another class,” he added. “So I’ll be stuck in Germany for the two-month travel ban, and four to six months on top of that.” The Army said soldiers can apply for hardship pay. They also established a hotline to answer questions for those facing financial problems in the wake of the pandemic. One soldier enroute to a training assignment when the travel ban came out Friday was told to turn his car around after driving 900 miles. “There’s not any guidance on how I will be paid for the gas and lodging,” the soldier, stationed at Fort Polk, said. “Finance office referred me to a 1-800 number that [was] so busy it [hung] up automatically.” There are exemptions to the travel ban policy being made, but only in rare circumstances. The soldier stuck in Germany applied for that exemption, but was denied without explanation. “What doesn’t make sense, is we were briefed at [the military personnel division] that if you’re ETS’ing or retiring, you can still go home, you can still take your family home,” said the soldier stuck in Germany. Army officials across each installation mentioned in this article said the seriousness of the coronavirus requires a serious response. [Army Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

APHC COVID-19 Communication Toolkit

This page contain communication messages and materials that Leaders, Public Affairs Officers, and communication staffs can use and tailor for various groups during the spread of COVID-19. Share these messages and products throughout your installation and on your social media platforms to raise awareness of and knowledge about COVID-19.



Military warns of 'social breakdowns' in other countries facing coronavirus; US crisis could last months

24 March- The coronavirus crises is likely to last several months in the United States and could cause political discord elsewhere, the U.S. military's top general warned Tuesday as Defense Department-related illnesses eclipsed 300 worldwide. Government forecasts predict the coronavirus will continue to spread throughout the United States for roughly three months based on its impacts on other nations, said Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He and Defense Secretary Mark Esper urged the U.S. military community to prepare to take health protection measures, which could include social distancing, possibly into the summer months. "You're looking at probably late May, June, maybe something as late as July," Milley said during a virtual town hall broadcast with Esper from the Pentagon. "But we will get through it. It's not a question of when. We will get through it, and we'll pull together as a country and a military and we ... will do whatever is required to defend the people of the United States." The Pentagon also announced Tuesday that 340 Defense Department-linked individuals throughout the world had tested positive for the coronavirus, an increase of 91 cases since Monday. The cases included 191 service members, of which 17 had recovered as of Tuesday. Nine troops across the force were hospitalized by the virus on Tuesday, the Pentagon said. The town hall briefing came one day after Esper upgraded the "health protection condition" for the Pentagon, increasing it to HPCON Charlie as dozens of other installations across the United States had already done. For the Pentagon, the increase to the second highest health threat level meant the closing of several entrances to the military's Arlington, Va. headquarters and limiting building access almost exclusively to those individuals — civilian and military — deemed mission essential. Esper said Tuesday that Pentagon employees who can work from home should be prepared to do so for the foreseeable future. He urged supervisors and commanders to allow their subordinates to telework as long as the crisis continued. He previously said more than 60 percent of the Pentagon workforce had been teleworking since last week. "I think we need to plan for this to be a few months long, at least. We're taking all precautionary measures to do that —to be in it for the long haul," Esper said. "We're going to telework as long as necessary to ensure we are beyond the coronavirus crisis ... as much as possible so we can protect our people while performing our mission."

[Stars and Stripes](#)

[top of page...](#)

No blanket social distancing policy in the military, SECDEF says

23 March- In the days following the first confirmed case of a service member with coronavirus, the Pentagon began breaking up meetings into teleconferences and putting distance between chairs in gathering spaces, while the defense secretary issued guidance force-wide allowing commanders to make decisions about public events, working from home and other measures to stop the viruses spread. Four weeks on, service members have

The Surgeon General Weekly Read Book

The Surgeon General Weekly Read Book is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level on the APHC SIPRNet site:

<https://intelshare.intelink.sgov.gov/sites/medcom-g2/SitePages/Home.aspx>

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

been sounding the alarm about the lack of precautions taken in their organizations, from packed military entrance processing stations to all-hands meetings and town halls. Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters Monday that commanders continue to have the authority to take, or not take, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations as they apply to their units. "There will be inconsistencies because every situation is unique. It's unique by the type of unit, it's unique by the mission, it's unique by the location – and any other number of factors," Esper said. "...but again, I have to trust our commanders and our senior [noncommissioned officers] are taking all the right precautions]. But there hasn't been any further accountability for commanders, Esper told Military Times, as he has not seen any situations that he believes need a second look. "We can all step into that same location and make a different call on each," Esper said. "That's why I have to trust the commanders. If there's something that sounds really egregious or whatnot, yeah, we should follow up on that, using the chain of command." [Military Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Clinicians struggle with PPE shortages

23 March- Clinicians on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic are scraping to find gowns, goggles, respirators, and other personal protective equipment (PPE) -- and coming up empty-handed. Many are frustrated with their employers for tightening protocols and access to protective gear; others blame the government for not doing more to ramp up production of these goods. "I just feel like apparently we're expendable," one California emergency room physician speaking on the condition of anonymity told MedPage Today. In fact, in a recent MedPage Today survey, 46% of respondents felt they didn't have adequate PPE, and 85% feared a lack of access in the future -- a sentiment echoed across social media, where healthcare workers are sharing their needs using the Twitter hashtag #GetMePPE. Obtaining N95 respirators posed a particular problem; often they were either unobtainable, rationed by administrators, or simply too difficult to locate at the point of care. Some clinicians reported wearing ponchos or cloth gowns instead of the disposable ones typically worn in such circumstances, and gauze or surgical masks in place of respirators. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

Coronavirus: Young people are not 'invincible', WHO warns

20 March- Young people are not immune from coronavirus and must avoid socialising and communicating it to older, more vulnerable people, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned. The choices made by the young can be "the difference between life and death for someone else", WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. Over 11,000 patients have died from the Covid-19 respiratory illness worldwide. Nearly 250,000 patients

Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About APHC](#)

[Army Public Health
Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance
Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings
\(AKO\)](#)

[Request APHC Services](#)

[APHC Resource Materials](#)

[APHC Homepage](#)

[APHC Training](#)

[Contact APHC](#)

have tested positive overall. The WHO chief's remarks follow reports that young people in many countries are being complacent about health warnings, because of the greater susceptibility to the virus among older patients. The coronavirus outbreak was first recorded in China in December. But now the centre of the pandemic is Europe. In Italy - where the virus has killed more people than in any other country - the death toll rose by 627 on Friday, reaching a total of 4,032, making it the deadliest day for one country since the outbreak began. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

FDA approves new coronavirus test that can have 'results within hours' instead of days

22 March- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued emergency authorization Saturday for a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) test kit made by Cepheid Inc. that can yield results in a matter of hours instead of days. The new tool is called the "Cepheid Xpert Xpress SARS-CoV-2 test" and will be made available to the public by the end of the month. "The test we're authorizing today will be able to provide Americans with results within hours, rather than days like the existing tests, and the company plans to roll it out by March 30," the FDA said in a press release. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar added: "With new tools like point-of-care diagnostics, we are moving into a new phase of testing, where tests will be much more easily accessible to Americans who need them." Cepheid, which is based out of Sunnyvale, Calif., provided Fox News with footage of the test kit that they claim can bounce back positive or negative results, in as little as 45 minutes.

[Fox News](#)

[top of page...](#)

We need to move faster to introduce new TB drugs

24 March- COVID-19's lethal invasion in late 2019 has turned the world inside out. Yet, another disease, tuberculosis, has been plaguing humans since the Upper Paleolithic era, some 20,000 years ago. In fact, many infection-prevention precautions promoted for the coronavirus—coughing etiquette, distancing, and hand washing—originated as TB-control measures in Victorian times. The COVID-19 response can draw on more challenges and lessons from TB programs that emphasize investments in research and rapid uptake of new diagnostic, prevention, and treatment tools for universal health coverage. Today, TB is the world's top infectious disease killer; it claimed 1.5 million lives in 2018 alone. It is difficult to cure, in part because the bacterium that causes it develops resistance to treatments over time. Yet when scientists develop new and effective drugs, countries are slow to adopt them, sentencing thousands in need to die. While the world's response to TB has rightly taken into account the multitude of socioeconomic factors that fuel its rampant spread, we will not beat the disease if we don't come up with a faster way to introduce new treatments—especially those that can treat both drug-resistant and drug-sensitive TB, which are more difficult to diagnose. [Global Health Now](#)

[top of page...](#)

What you need to know about the coronavirus right now

24 March- In its latest drastic step, the U.S. Fed offered to buy unlimited amounts of assets to steady financial markets and expanded its mandate to include corporate and municipal bonds. The promise eased some strains in markets in Asia although Wall Street seemed unimpressed. Analysts cautioned it would do little to offset the near-term economic damage done by mass lockdowns and layoffs. Business surveys scheduled to be issued on Tuesday are expected to demonstrate the devastation on the global economy of the virus. In Japan, the services sector shrank at its fastest pace on record this month, and similarly grim forecasts are expected from the euro zone and the United States later on Tuesday.

The spread: Confirmed coronavirus cases crossed 377,000 across 194 countries and territories as of 0200 GMT on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, with over 16,500 deaths linked to the virus. Almost 40,000 cases and over 1,800 deaths were reported in the past day. It took exactly 30 days for the first 40,000 cases to be reported, and then 15 days for the second 40,000. Of the top 10 countries by case numbers, Italy has reported the highest fatality rate, at around 10%, which is reflective of its older population. The fatality rate globally is around 4.3%. While new infections remain low in China, the country has seen a noticeable rebound in cases over the past week, largely from people returning the country. On Tuesday it reported 78 new cases, roughly double the number reported on Monday, as restrictions ease.

Grounded planes look for a parking space: Taxiways, maintenance hangars and even runways at major airports are being transformed into giant parking lots for more than 2,500 airliners, the biggest of which takes up about as much room as an eight-story building with a footprint 3/4 the size of an American football field. The number of planes in storage has doubled to more than 5,000 since the start of the year, according to Cirium data, with more expected to be parked in the coming weeks as carriers like Australia's Qantas Airways and Singapore Airlines cut flight schedules.

All around the world, leaders urge 'go home, stay home': Police in Britain have the power to disperse gatherings, and overseas Britons have been advised to return home immediately. In Canada, officials have said that people ignoring advice to self-isolate could be fined or arrested, and on Tuesday, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern appealed to New Zealanders for their help. "This plan will only work if you help us," she said in an interview to state broadcaster TVNZ. "You may feel resilient and well, but it's not just about you. It's about everyone around you." [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

Who should be saved first? Experts offer ethical guidance

24 March- How do doctors and hospitals decide who gets potentially lifesaving treatment and who doesn't? A lot of thought has been given to just such a predicament, well before critical shortages from the coronavirus pandemic. "It would be irresponsible at this point not to get ready to make tragic decisions about who lives and who dies," said Dr. Matthew

Wynia, director of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Colorado. Facing this dilemma recently — who gets a ventilator or a hospital bed — Italian doctors sought ethical council and were told to consider an approach that draws on utilitarian principles. In layman's terms, a utilitarianism approach would maximize overall health by directing care toward those most likely to benefit the most from it. If you had only one ventilator, it would go to someone more likely to survive instead of someone deemed unlikely to do so. It would not go to whichever patient was first admitted, and it would not be assigned via a lottery system. (If there are ties within classes of people, then a lottery — choosing at random — is what ethicists recommend.) [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Why soap, sanitizer and warm water work against Covid-19 and other viruses

24 March- Tired of washing your hands for 20 seconds each time? Fingers starting to prune or feel like sandpaper? Please don't stop. The world is counting on you to help stop the spread of Covid-19, the deadly new disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, or severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. Take heart that while you're scrubbing, you're also killing off a host of other nasty bacteria and potentially lethal viruses that have plagued humans for centuries -- including influenza and a number of different coronaviruses. "There are four coronaviruses that circulate in humans regularly, almost every year," said virologist Dr. John Williams, chief of the division of pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. "And they mainly cause colds; in fact, they cause about a third of common colds. They don't kill people," he added. Coronaviruses aren't the only nasty parasites that succumb to a vigorous application of soap and water. Influenza -- which kills millions around the world each year -- and the human metapneumovirus, which causes a respiratory infection that can lead to pneumonia, also break down and die. How did such a simple thing as soap and warm water -- and alcohol-based sanitizers -- obtain such power over these parasites? The answer lies in their "skin" and your scrubbing technique. [CNN](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

Key Updates for Week 11, ending March 14, 2020: Laboratory confirmed flu activity as reported by clinical laboratories continued to decrease; however, influenza-like illness activity increased. Influenza severity indicators remain moderate to low overall, but hospitalization rates differ by age group, with high rates among children and young adults.

[CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S. Army Public Health Center Army Influenza Activity Report

Week ending 07 March 2020 (week 10): During week 10, there were 6,179 specimens submitted for testing, which represents an 8% increase from week 9. Influenza A represented the majority (74%) of positive specimens submitted for testing. At 21%, PHC-C had the highest percent-positive rate for specimens tested for influenza A compared to other regions. Additionally, PHC-C accounted for the greatest number of positive influenza A specimens (n=325). Seventy-one percent of positive influenza A specimens were from non-AD beneficiaries. Beneficiaries younger than 18 years old comprised the majority (n=438) of total positive respiratory specimens, and was followed by individuals 18 to 29 years of age (n=124). Two influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported in week 10. [APHC](#)

[top of page...](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

16 March 2020 - Update number 363, based on data up to 01 March 2020:

- In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, respiratory illness indicators and influenza activity appeared to decrease overall.
- In North America, influenza-like illness (ILI) and influenza activity started to decline, with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and B viruses co-circulating.
- In Europe, influenza activity remained elevated overall, though appeared to have peaked in some countries.
- In Central Asia, influenza activity decreased with detections of all seasonal influenza subtypes.
- In Northern Africa, influenza activity continued to increase in Algeria and Tunisia, with detections of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and B viruses.
- In Western Asia, influenza activity decreased in most countries, except in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Qatar.
- In East Asia, ILI and influenza activity decreased overall.
- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, influenza activity was reported in some countries. In Mexico, influenza activity decreased, with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses most frequently detected.
- In tropical South American countries, influenza activity remained low.
- In tropical Africa, influenza detections were low across reporting countries.
- In Southern Asia, increased influenza activity was reported in Bhutan.
- In South East Asia, influenza activity continued to be reported in some countries.

-In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.

-Worldwide, seasonal influenza A viruses accounted for the majority of detections. [WHO top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Hong Kong records rise in foodborne outbreaks

25 March- Almost 200 foodborne outbreaks affecting 800 people were reported in Hong Kong in 2019, according to a new report. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and Department of Health are responsible for investigating and controlling food poisoning outbreaks related to local premises and businesses. This past year, the CFS received 184 food poisoning outbreaks reported from the Department of Health, affecting 805 people. The number of outbreaks has shown a decreasing trend during the past decade, although there was a slight rise in 2019. This increase was mainly because of a lapse in hygiene in a few incidents leading to more outbreaks and people affected. CFS reported 158 foodborne outbreaks affecting 641 people from the Department of Health in 2018. Bacterial foodborne agents remained the leading cause of all foodborne disease outbreaks in 2019. Salmonella was behind 58.5 percent of all bacterial cases, followed by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* at 26.3 percent and then *Bacillus cereus* and *Staphylococcus aureus* both at 5.3 percent. Viral causes accounted for around 9.2 percent of food poisoning outbreaks and norovirus was involved in most cases. Inadequate cooking, contamination by raw food and improper holding temperature were the most frequently identified contributing factors. Biochemical agents caused 1.6 percent of outbreaks and 0.5 percent were due to chemicals. [Food Safety News](#)

[top of page...](#)

Spate of salad recalls in Australia due to Salmonella

24 March- A number of salad products have been recalled in an Australian state because of Salmonella contamination. Recalls in Western Australia involve the Loose Leaf Lettuce Co., Supreme Salads, Fresh Frontier and Quality Produce International. There have been no reports of illness associated with the products. The Loose Leaf Lettuce Co. recalled Asian Salad Mix and Special Salad Mix 200-gram with best-before dates from March 21 to 28 due to microbial contamination. They were sold at various independent retailers and IGA stores in Western Australia. During routine testing the Special Salad Mix was found to be positive for Salmonella, according to a company statement. "As a precaution, we are recalling all Special Salad Mix and products with any of the same ingredients (Asian Salad Mix, Tatsoi, Mizuna and Swiss Chard) with a best before date between March 21 and 28 inclusive. "Please return any of this product to your place of purchase for a refund. We sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused, and we want to reassure you that we are taking all actions to ensure our food is safe. All our other product lines are unaffected." [Food Safety](#)

[News](#)

[top of page...](#)

Two dozen more sick in E. coli outbreak traced to raw clover sprouts

19 March- Public health officials have identified another 25 victims in an E. coli outbreak traced to raw sprouts that were served at Jimmy John's, sold at Whole Foods and other retailers, and distributed to unknown entities. Updates from the FDA and CDC this afternoon reported the six-state outbreak has now sickened 39 people, with 27 of them in Utah. Iowa has 3 cases, Illinois has 6 and there is one each in Missouri, Texas, and Florida. Two people have been admitted to hospitals. No deaths have been reported to federal officials. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has traced the outbreak to sprouts grown by Chicago Indoor Garden, and possibly other growers. The agency specifically identified the outbreak strain of E. coli in sprouts from Chicago Indoor Garden. The sprouts E. coli O103 outbreak is being investigated separately from an outbreak in late 2019, FDA officials told Food Safety News, because of the length of time between the last illness onset date in the first outbreak and the first onset date of the current outbreak. Both outbreaks involve Jimmy John's and on Feb. 24 the chain stopped offering red clover sprouts. "The sample also matches the outbreak strain from the November-December 2019 outbreak in Iowa, which was associated with sprouts from various Jimmy John's restaurants," according to the agency's update today. [Food Safety News](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

How 'muscle memory' may help keep us fit

25 March- For those of us sheltering at home because of coronavirus and unable to visit the gym or otherwise weight train — which, right now, is most of us — a new study of the inner workings of our muscles should be heartening. It finds that if muscles have been trained in the past, they seem to develop a molecular memory of working out that lingers through a prolonged period of inactivity, and once we start training again, this "muscle memory" could speed the process by which we regain our former muscular strength and size. The findings suggest, in effect, that skipping workouts now need not guarantee enfeeblement later, and if we forget what fitness once felt like, our muscles recollect. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

COVID-19 in Africa: Nigeria, South Africa

20 March- The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has found its way to Africa and to date, 34 of the 54 countries in the African continent have reported cases—Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Seychelles, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Rwanda, Ghana, Sudan, Liberia, Benin, Tanzania, Somalia, Djibouti, Zambia, Mauritius and Gambia. Deaths have been reported in Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Burkina. South Africa has reported one of the highest totals in Africa so far. As of 19 March 2020, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) confirms 34 new COVID-19 cases bringing the total number of COVID-19 cases to 150 people, the majority of whom are based in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces respectively. Of the 34 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases, the majority are imported and two are locally transmitted. Contact tracing of all persons that the patients might have come into contact with is underway. In the continent's most populous country, Nigeria, the NCDC reported four new confirmed cases of COVID-19 Thursday, bringing the country total to 12. All the four new cases are from Lagos. One had a travel history to the UK; one to France, 3rd case is a contact to one of the previously confirmed cases; 4th case had no history of travel. Egypt has reported the most cases in Africa with 256 to date. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Iran rejects 'foreign' help as virus death toll nears 2,000

24 March- Iran ruled out "foreign" help on the ground to deal with the coronavirus pandemic after an offer from a France-based medical charity, as the country's death toll from the contagion neared 2,000. "Due to Iran's national mobilisation against the virus and the full use of the medical capacity of the armed forces, it is not necessary for now for hospital beds to be set up by foreign forces, and their presence is ruled out," Alireza Vahabzadeh, adviser to Iran's health minister, said on Tuesday. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

Italy COVID-19 case count nears 60K, New ordinance on travel

22 March- The Italy Ministry of Health recorded an additional 5,560 COVID-19 cases during the past 24 hours, bringing the epidemic total in the country to 59,138. Officials also reported 651 additional deaths. Italy has reported 5,476 fatalities to date (9.2% CFR). The government also issued a new ordinance concerning travel today: From today it is forbidden for all natural persons to move or move with public or private means of transport in common other than that in which they are located, except for proven work needs, of absolute urgency or for health reasons. This is established by the order adopted jointly by the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Interior which will remain effective until the entry into force of a new decree of the President of the Council of Ministers, referred to in article 3 of decree law number 6/2020. . "These are crucial days. We need to minimize travel – said Health Minister, Roberto Speranza, commenting on the new ordinance -. Those who will not go to work from tomorrow are essential that they stay home and thus help all those who must continue to work. It is essential that everyone does their part. " [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

Spain COVID-19 cases near 30K, State of emergency extended

23 March- Officials in Spain are now reporting nearly 30,000 coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 cases as Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez decided Sunday to extend the state of emergency in the country. The autonomous communities of Madrid (9,702), Catalonia (4,704) and Basque Country (2,097) continue to report the most cases. More than 1,800 deaths have been reported in Spain. Pedro Sánchez has appeared in La Moncloa after holding a videoconference with the presidents of the autonomous communities and cities, to whom he has communicated the decision to extend the current state of emergency throughout the national territory for another fifteen days. "It is a drastic measure, one of the most drastic of those adopted by the countries around us. I know that it is very uncomfortable for the whole of Spanish citizens and that it is completely affecting the lives of families, but experts agree on that is effective in the fight against the coronavirus," he said. Other measures to be implemented in Spain include all trips made from third countries will be restricted for thirty days and are not essential, placing more resources for nursing homes, expanding the activities of the military and providing resources to municipalities for the delivery of food and basic necessities and pharmaceuticals to their homes, so that older people do not have to leave their homes. Lastly, the Ministry of Health distributed this to the Autonomous Communities a total of 1,602,800 masks for patients and health professionals this weekend. In addition, Health has reinforced the processes of acquisition

of this medical product through new purchases of much more numerous items, which will arrive in Spain over the next week. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USINDOPACOM

Coronavirus: Wuhan to ease lockdown as world battles pandemic

24 March- The lockdown in Wuhan, the Chinese city where the global coronavirus outbreak began, will be partially lifted on 8 April, officials say. Travel restrictions in the rest of Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, will be lifted from midnight on Tuesday - for residents who are healthy. A single new case of the virus was reported in Wuhan on Tuesday following almost a week of no reported new cases. Countries around the world have gone into lockdown or imposed severe curbs. The UK is getting to grips with sweeping new measures to tackle the spread of coronavirus, including a ban on public gatherings of more than two people and the immediate closure of shops selling non-essential goods. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

Philippines COVID-19 cases top 300, more labs testing

21 March- The Philippines Department of Health (DOH) are now reporting 307 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of Saturday, including 19 deaths. Quezon City (14.3%), San Juan City (8.8%) and Pasig City and Makati City, each accounting for 6.2% of cases, are the cities reporting the most cases nationally. In addition, DOH announced the acquisition of more test kits and labs able to perform testing. In addition to the current 1,300 available kits and recently delivered kits (2,050) from China and South Korea, DOH is anticipating additional 120,500 units from different countries, such as China, Korea, and Brunei. DOH also announced that five (5) sub-national laboratories are now operating alongside the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine. These are San Lazaro Hospital, and Baguio General Hospital & Medical Center for Luzon, Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center for Visayas, and Southern Philippines Medical Center for Mindanao. These laboratories are able to process between 50-300 tests daily. Two additional laboratories are being set-up. Western Visayas Medical Center and Bicol Public Health Laboratory will undergo proficiency testing for one week before it can begin testing. The University of the Philippines-National Institutes of Health as an extension lab has also been mobilized and is currently testing overflow samples from the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine. "We must underscore the importance of laboratory certification due to the hazards of handling a live virus. The Department is exercising utmost care in certifying more sub-national laboratories and ensuring that biosafety measures are in place," Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III emphasized. Further, the DOH will be assisted by World Health Organization and the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, to assess five (5) more molecular biology laboratories in private tertiary hospitals as possible extension labs starting March 21. These

are St. Lukes Medical Center – Global City, Makati Medical Center, The Medical City, and St. Lukes Medical Center – Quezon City, and Chinese General Hospital. More laboratories will be assessed across all regions after this first round is completed. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

Sri Lanka COVID-19 and dengue updates

22 March- With the addition of a confirmed coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 case Saturday, the total case count in Sri Lanka now stands at 78 with one case reported in January and 77 reported in March. Colombo district has reported the most cases with 16, followed by Gampaha with 10. 31 cases are reported in quarantine centers. The gender and age distribution shows that cases in males outnumber females two to one and more than 80 percent of cases are between 21 and 60 years of age. No deaths have been reported in Sri Lanka to date. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

U.S.: California- Los Angeles COVID-19- More than 400 cases, 5 deaths

23 March- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is reporting 409 coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 cases through Sunday. Of this total, five deaths have been reported. Public Health is investigating all new cases and will notify close contacts who are household members, intimate partners and healthcare professionals to assess and monitor them for signs and symptoms of illness. All confirmed cases are being isolated and close contacts are quarantined. It is critically important that everyone adheres to all the social distancing measures and practice good public health hygiene, including washing hands as frequently as possible. “We are deeply sorry for the passing of loved ones and send our prayers to the families and friends of those who have died from COVID-19,” said Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Los Angeles County Public Health Director. “It is critical that everyone practices social distancing, obey the Safer at Home Health Officer Order and assume that anyone can have COVID-19, and anyone could unintentionally infect others. Please know that the actions you take today to stay 6 feet away from others and limit all non-essential activities outside your home are the best way for us to slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.” On March, 21 Public Health issued an enhanced Health Officer Order to reconcile elements in the March 19 Health Officer Order necessary to be consistent with the Governor’s Order. The enhanced Order prohibits all gatherings and events, and clarifies that golf courses and personal grooming services (including hair and nail salons) are non-essential services that are closed. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: New York- Reports 4,800 additional COVID-19 cases, Army Corps of Engineers will begin construction on four temporary hospital sites

22 March- The New York Department of Health recorded an additional 4,812 coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 cases, bringing the statewide total to 15,168. This includes 9,045 cases in New York City. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today accepted the recommendation of the Army Corps of Engineers for four temporary hospital sites in New York State in an effort to address imminent capacity issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor visited the four sites – the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, and locations at SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Old Westbury and the Westchester Convention Center — yesterday, and New York State is ready for the Army Corps of Engineers to begin construction immediately. Hospitals at the SUNY campus sites will be constructed indoors with outdoor tent support and the dormitories on the campuses will be used for healthcare staff to stay while working at the sites. Governor Cuomo also announced that FEMA will erect four additional federal hospital facilities within the Javits Center, in addition to the temporary hospital to be constructed by the Army Corps. Each of the four federal hospitals will have 250 beds and come fully equipped and fully staffed by the federal government.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil reports coronavirus cases in all states, São Paulo hardest hit

25 March- Health officials in Brazil report the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the country rose to 2,201. In fact, officials report all states in the country have registered cases of the disease, but not all regions have the same level of transmission. The northern region, for example, has 3.7% of the total cases in Brazil. At the other end, the Southeast region represents the highest percentage, in the order of 58.1%. São Paulo has reported the most cases with 810, followed by Rio de Janeiro with 305. To date, 46 deaths have been confirmed, 40 in the state of São Paulo and six in Rio de Janeiro. The executive secretary of the Ministry of Health, João Gabbardo, explained that most cases of coronavirus are asymptomatic, that is, the person will have the disease, but will have no symptoms. "Out of every 100 patients with coronavirus, we were able to identify 14. About 86% of people who have coronavirus are not identified. This occurs worldwide. We work with an index that would be based on the evolution of other countries of an increase in the number of data confirmed at 33% per day. This means that every three days, we would have doubled the number of cases. This has happened. However, we have generally been below 33%. The growth curve is within our expectations. It is the country that has the greatest variation in cases in the 10 most affected countries. We are below the average among countries. To

guarantee a collective effort by all Brazilians to reduce the transmission speed of the coronavirus, last Friday, the Ministry of Health recognized the community transmission of COVID-19 throughout the country. Thus, the measure is a strategy for the whole of Brazil to unite against the virus. In practical terms, the declaration is a command from the Ministry of Health for all national managers to adopt measures to promote social distance and avoid congregations, known as non-pharmacological measures, that is, that do not involve the use of medicines or vaccines. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

Venezuela: COVID-19 cases rise to 70, Cuban doctors arrive

22 March- The sectoral vice president of Communication, Culture and Tourism, Jorge Rodríguez, assured that of the 70 positive cases of coronavirus (Covid-19) registered to date, 100 percent are imported from Europe, Colombia and the US. Rodríguez specified that of the 70 positive cases for Covid-19, 15 of them have recovered satisfactorily as they did not present symptoms for 5 days, were not older than 70 years because they are a vulnerable population, and did not present any type of chronic pathology previously. He added that only two cases in the country are in critical condition, both hospitalized in private centers. The sectoral vice president assured that to date there have been no deaths due to this pandemic in the country. On Friday, 137 doctors from the Republic of Cuba arrived at the Simón Bolívar International Airport in Maiquetía, La Guaira state, to strengthen the Barrio Adentro Mission that will contribute to the work for prevention and containment of COVID-19 in Venezuela, as part of the Cuba-Venezuela Agreement. This group of doctors is part of the first contingent of 2000 health professionals requested by the President of the Republic, Nicolás Maduro, and which were approved by the Republic of Cuba, to support the efforts to prevent and contain the Coronavirus pandemic that it affects Venezuela and humanity. "We are welcoming 137 Cuban doctors who are joining the army of white coats who are at the forefront of the fight against the Coronavirus in Venezuela," said Minister Alvarado, while indicating that this contingent is joining prevention and COVID-19's attention to the work being done in an integrated manner with the country's living forces. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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