

OSF HealthCare leaders remain prepared and on alert if the situation changes and the relatively contained COVID-19 virus spreads more quickly in Illinois and the US.

A fourth Illinois patient has tested positive for COVID-19 and is the woman in her 70s who is the wife of a state's third case who Cook County Public Health officials said tested positive over the weekend. The positive test results will have to be confirmed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lab. The man is in isolation and receiving care at Northwest Community Hospital, according to a statement Monday from hospital officials. His wife is in isolation at home.

The outbreak first started in Wuhan, China, but cases have been identified in a growing number of other [international locations](#), including the United States. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) will be updating its locations link regularly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays along with any current travel advisories.

So far, there have been three confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Illinois. The third patient in Illinois to test positive for the COVID-19 novel coronavirus is being treated at a hospital in Arlington Heights, hospital officials said Monday.

Earlier this month, Illinois became the first state to provide COVID-19 testing in-state and public health officials are working on increasing capacity for rapid results.

OSF HealthCare Director of Infection Prevention and Control Lori Grooms said the Peoria-based health system is working with state and federal public health officials to take all preventative steps available to limit the spread of COVID-19, even though the virus is not spreading in an uncontained way right now.

Infection Prevention Mission Partners throughout OSF HealthCare have daily contact with public health agencies, in addition to supply chain and emergency management leaders within the hospital system.

"We have been working and already drafted plans if we were to fall short on some of our necessary supplies, such as our Personal Protective Equipment. But we're not at a point where supplies are not available for patient care," she said.

Grooms says for example, OSF HealthCare is working to conserve critical supplies such as N95 masks and we could begin to cluster care.

"Instead of going into the room three times to perform three separate tasks, how can we bring those tasks together and perform them all at the same time. That would help to alleviate the burden on the number supplies that we need; the protective equipment that we're wearing," she suggested.

The best approach to reduce the spread of any airborne virus, including the flu and COVID-19, is community-level mitigation. More simply put, that means taking everyday preventive actions, such as [frequent hand-washing](#). Simple precautions are the first line of defense against infectious diseases.

Grooms also emphasizes coughing into your sleeve or a tissue and then washing hands. And, don't forget to sanitize your cell phone at least once daily.

She stressed, "A cell phone pretty much is an extension of your hand and we put it in our purses, put it down on the counter, people probably take it into the bathroom with them you know. It had a lot of contact with a lot of surfaces that have germs on them."

Most importantly, health officials including Grooms, are begging people to stay home if they are sick. While no one likes to burden co-workers with additional duties Grooms says the results will be worse if you come to work sick and infect others.

COVID-19 causes pneumonia-like symptoms, ranging from mild such as a slight cough to the more severe with fever and difficulty breathing. The CDC says the virus has had the biggest impact on the elderly and people with weakened immune systems.

Grooms recommends if you have been to one of the countries with COVID-19 and you have flu-like symptoms call ahead to make sure the urgent care or medical office is prepared to see you.

"Our call center does have a triage group that will ask you some questions and will really help you know where's the best place to go so you're not having to go to the doctor's office and be transferred to another office to be transferred to another office." She adds, "We want to direct you to where you're going get the appropriate care and the appropriate level that you need."

She also encourages using [OSF OnCall](#) which offers an online visit to treat many conditions and the health provider can also give advice about the need for additional medical treatment.

So far, there have only been two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Illinois. Earlier this month, Illinois became the first state to provide COVID-19 testing in-state and public health officials are working on increasing capacity for rapid results.

There is no vaccine yet for the virus and supportive care in isolation is the usual treatment except in the most severe cases of COVID-19 which could require breathing treatments and/or use of a respirator.

Health officials acknowledge the mortality rate of COVID-19 is 2.3% but [the incidence and the impact of the seasonal flu remains far greater](#). Anyone six months or older should [get a flu shot this season](#) which is expected to last longer into this spring.

Consult your doctor early on for the best treatment, but also be aware of [emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention](#).