

Black Americans appear most vulnerable as U.S. coronavirus deaths near 13,000

April 8 2020, by Robin Foster and E.j. Mundell, Healthday Reporters



WEDNESDAY, April 8, 2020 (HealthDay News)—As the U.S.

coronavirus death toll neared 13,000 on Wednesday, federal health officials were considering new guidelines that would make it easier for those who have been exposed to the virus to return to work if they show no symptoms.

Troubling statistics also emerged showing that black Americans are significantly more prone to illness and death from infection with the new coronavirus compared to whites.

According to Vice President Mike Pence, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in conjunction with the White House coronavirus task force, may announce the new self-isolation guidelines as soon as Wednesday.

Speaking at a Tuesday news briefing, Pence said that under the newly proposed guidance, people who are exposed to the virus could return to their job if they are asymptomatic, test their temperature twice a day and wear a [face mask](#), the *Washington Post* reported.

Blacks at high risk

A new analysis also found that COVID-19 is infecting and killing black Americans at a disproportionately high rate. A *Post* analysis of early data from across the country shows that counties that are mostly black have three times the rate of infections and almost six times the rate of deaths as counties where white residents are in the majority.

President Donald Trump acknowledged the racial disparity during a coronavirus task force briefing Tuesday.

"We are doing everything in our power to address this challenge, and it's a tremendous challenge," Trump said. "It's terrible."

"Why is it three or four times more so for the black community as opposed to other people?" Trump said. "It doesn't make sense, and I don't like it, and we are going to have statistics over the next probably two to three days."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious diseases expert, also weighed in during the media briefing, saying that the coronavirus crisis is "shining a bright light on how unacceptable" those disparities are.

"There is nothing we can do about it right now except to try and give" black Americans "the best possible care to avoid complications," Fauci added.

Regardless of race, coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx issued stark advice about this coming week to all Americans on Sunday: "This is the moment to not be going to the [grocery store](#), not going to the pharmacy, but doing everything you can to keep your family and your friends safe," she stressed.

That warning comes as many Americans prepare to celebrate religious holidays that mark the onset of spring. Passover begins Wednesday night, and Easter is this coming Sunday.

Face Coverings in Public

Even if Americans go out in public this week, new federal guidance now urges all Americans to wear face coverings in public to curb the spread of COVID-19.

These face coverings can be non-medical masks, T-shirts or bandanas and they can be used while out at everyday shopping spots such as the grocery store, pharmacy or gas station, the *Associated Press* reported. Medical-grade masks would be reserved for those dealing directly with

the sick.

Any additional COVID-19 prevention measures are welcome, as the number of coronavirus cases worldwide swept past 1.4 million.

As cases rise across the United States, the economy appeared headed toward a free fall.

Last Thursday, the U.S. Labor Department reported that 6.6 million Americans filed for unemployment in the past week.

For the second straight week, jobless claims have been record-setting, with the latest claims bringing the two-week total to 10 million, the *Times* reported.

Meanwhile, the death toll in the United States reached 12,956 on Wednesday and it continued to outpace other nations with more than 397,754 confirmed infections, a Johns Hopkins tally shows.

New York City hit hard

New York remains the hardest hit area of the country. More than 5,500 people have died in New York as of Wednesday. But other measures of the pandemic have been slowing.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Tuesday that hospital admissions and the number of people receiving breathing tubes are dropping, the *AP* reported. And the death toll itself is a "lagging indicator," reflecting people who had been hospitalized before this week, he explained.

But he warned that any gains depend on continued social distancing. "It still depends on what we do, and what we do will affect those numbers," he said.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., have issued stay-at-home orders for the more than 15.2 million residents of those three states, the *Post* reported.

Economic help

As the U.S. economy continues to falter, Americans started to try to find out if they can receive benefits from a \$2 trillion stimulus package that was passed into law in March.

The legislation should send \$1,200 to millions of Americans, including those earning up to \$75,000, along with \$500 per child. It will also give an additional 13 weeks in unemployment aid and a four-month enhancement of jobless benefits, the *Times* reported.

Hospitals on the front lines of the pandemic will also get \$100 billion, the *Times* reported.

The help comes not a moment too soon, as roughly 90% of Americans are under stay-at-home orders, the *AP* reported.

Cases are just starting to spike elsewhere, particularly in the South: Louisiana, Florida and Georgia are facing alarming increases, with 40,179 cases and 1,225 deaths reported in those three states alone, the *Times* reported Wednesday.

Some health officials are warning that parts of Michigan, Colorado and Illinois could be the next epicenters of the coronavirus pandemic, *CNN* reported. By Wednesday, Michigan had reported 18,852 cases and 845 deaths, the *Times* reported.

As different nations wonder what is in store for their citizens in the coming months, one glimmer of hope has emerged:

All restrictions in the Chinese city of Wuhan the first to go into lockdown back in January were lifted Wednesday as the city's 11 million residents returned to their jobs and schools.

The good news in China stood in sharp relief to what is unfolding in Europe.

Global crisis

On Wednesday, Spain reported 14,555 deaths, despite signs the infection rate is slowing, a Johns Hopkins tally showed. Meanwhile, Italy recorded over 17,000 deaths, the worst of any country, though new infections continued to level off.

In Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has declared a state of emergency in seven prefectures that include the country's largest population centers as cases there are on the rise, the *Times* reported. Abe also announced an economic stimulus package worth nearly \$1 trillion.

In the United Kingdom, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson spent his second night in intensive care on Tuesday after being taken to St. Thomas' hospital over the weekend for persistent COVID-19 symptoms. He is not on a ventilator, and is in good spirits, the *AP* reported.

In the meantime, the public lives of Americans have come to a halt, as the coronavirus pandemic has prompted officials across the country to close, cancel or postpone any event or activity that might foster the spread of COVID-19.

New York, New Jersey and California have been hard hit by [coronavirus](#) cases in the United States. New York has more than 140,000 cases, New Jersey has more than 44,416 cases and California's case count is 17,540, according to the *Times*.

However, signs of hope emerged in Washington state, where strict social distancing measures may be contributing to a leveling off in new cases, the *Times* reported.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 1.4 million on Wednesday, with nearly 83,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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