

CDC urges all Americans to wear face masks as death count rises

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The White House announced new guidance on Friday that urges all

Americans to wear face coverings in public to curb the spread of COVID-19.

As President Donald Trump told the American public about the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation during a [coronavirus](#) task force briefing, he noted he will not be following it, *The New York Times* reported.

"With the masks, it is going to be a voluntary thing," Trump said. "You can do it. You don't have to do it. I am choosing not to do it. It may be good. It is only a recommendation, voluntary."

These face coverings can be non-medical masks, T-shirts or bandannas 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 million and the United States saw its death count top 8,500 on Sunday.

As cases rise across the country, the U.S. economy appeared headed toward a free fall.

On 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.

Until now, the worst week for unemployment filings was 695,000 in

1982, the newspaper reported.

As the troubling numbers kept climbing, [state officials](#) across the country said they are running out of face masks, gloves and other protective equipment amid reports that the federal government's emergency medical supply stockpile is rapidly dwindling, the *Washington Post* reported.

"A lot of death' ahead

While Vice President Mike Pence warned that America's situation is most comparable to Italy's massive struggle with the virus during a Wednesday media briefing, Trump held out the possibility of potential flight restrictions between hard-hit areas of the United States, the *Post* reported. However, he noted that it would be difficult to entirely suspend air travel.

"I am looking where flights are going into hot spots," Trump said during the media briefing.

Such measures may be needed, as the White House coronavirus task force delivered a particularly grim statistic to Americans on Tuesday: The U.S. death toll from COVID-19 could climb to 240,000, even with social distancing policies in place.

During a media briefing on Saturday, Trump warned citizens to brace for more deaths, *CBS News* reported.

"This will probably be the toughest week between this week and next week, and a lot of death, unfortunately," he said.

The [death](#) toll in the United States reached 8,499 on Saturday and it continued to outpace other nations with more than 311,500 confirmed

infections, the *Times* reported.

New York City struggles with cases

New York remains the hardest hit area of the country. Nearly 3,600 people have died in New York.

On Thursday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned that his state could run out of breathing machines in six days.

"If a person comes in and needs a ventilator and you don't have a ventilator, the person dies," Cuomo said during his daily media briefing. "That's the blunt equation here. And right now we have a burn rate that would suggest we have about six days in the stockpile."

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.

While all three jurisdictions had already banned gatherings, closed businesses and schools, and urged people to stay home, the new orders are mandatory and breaking them could include fines and potential jail time.

In the face of rapidly rising coronavirus case numbers and deaths, Trump backed down on plans to re-open the country by Easter—instead extending strict social distancing guidelines for the country to April 30.

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 Friday.

New York state is the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, with nearly 115,000 cases and 3,568 deaths, according to the *Times*.

More than 2,000 nurses, along with 500 paramedics and emergency medical technicians, were joining the U.S. Navy and the National Guard to help New York's health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic, the *Times* reported.

Meanwhile, the home of the U.S. Open in Queens was being turned into a triage center, and hospital tents were being set up in Central Park, the newspaper reported.

Cases are just starting to spike elsewhere, particularly in the South: Louisiana, Florida and Georgia are facing alarming increases, with 30,416 cases and 814 deaths reported in those three states alone, the *Times* reported Sunday.

Some health officials are warning that parts of Michigan and Illinois could be the next epicenters of the coronavirus pandemic, *CNN* reported. By Sunday, Michigan had reported 14,225 cases and 540 deaths, the

Times reported.

Global crisis

As different nations wonder what is in store for their citizens in the coming months, one glimmer of hope has emerged: China has lifted travel restrictions on the Hubei province, which was hardest hit by coronavirus earlier this year. And public transportation has been re-opened this week in Wuhan, the city that was the original epicenter of the outbreak, the *AP* said. On Saturday, China held a national day of mourning for those who have died in the pandemic.

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

On Sunday, Spain reported more than 12,400 deaths, despite signs the infection rate is slowing, a Johns Hopkins tally showed. Meanwhile, Italy recorded 15,362 deaths, the worst of any country, though new infections continued to level off. France recorded 7,560 deaths, the Hopkins tally showed. But officials expect the overall toll to jump significantly because they are only now starting to count deaths in nursing homes and other facilities for older people.

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 almost 115,000 cases, New Jersey has more than 34,000 cases and California's case count is nearing 14,000, 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.

Another cruise ship hit hard

Meanwhile, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, has issued a 30-day stay-at-home order this week that tells nearly 21 million residents to stay indoors unless they are pursuing "essential services or activities," the *Post* reported. Florida now has more than 11,500 cases, with 194 deaths.

On Thursday, a cruise ship with sick passengers and its sister ship docked in Florida, *NBC News* reported.

Four people have died on the *Zaandam*, at least two of them from COVID-19. Nine others have tested positive and 179 more have flu-like symptoms, *NBC News* reported.

Once docked, nine passengers were taken to a local hospital while 45 passengers who are ill will remain on board. Parent company Holland America Line will put foreign nationals on sanitized buses to take them to waiting chartered planes, *NBC News* said.

Asymptomatic passengers from the *Zaandam* have been taken to its sister ship, the *Rotterdam*. More than 300 Americans are aboard the ships.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 1.2 million, with over 66,500 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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