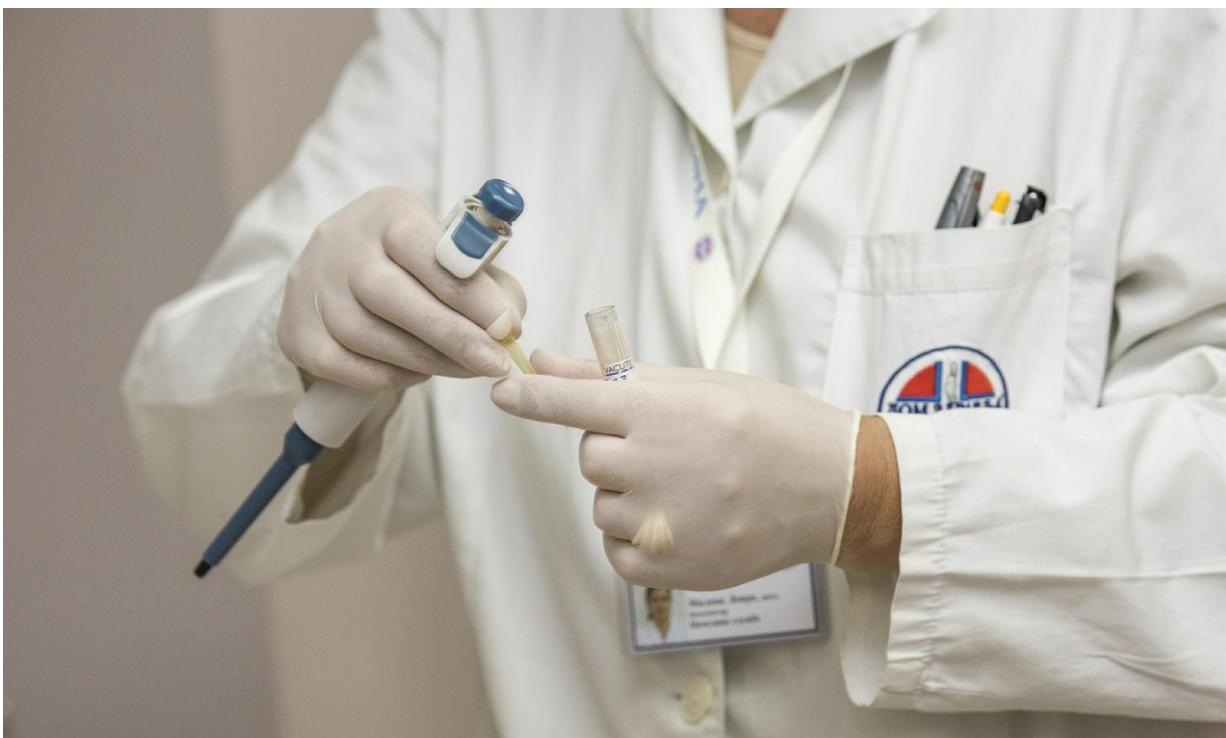


'A new phase': US health officials pledge to ramp up nationwide coronavirus testing beginning this week

March 16 2020, by John Fritze and David Jackson



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Health officials said Sunday they are planning to ramp up coronavirus testing by tens of thousands of additional people a week, beginning this week.

Vice President Mike Pence and other [health officials](#) said two factors will allow them to increase testing capacity dramatically in coming days: Some 2,000 labs coming online across the nation to process tests and high throughput tests that can be used for drive-through or walk-up [test centers](#).

"We are now in a new phase of testing," said Adm. Brett P. Giroir, assistant secretary of health at Department of Health and Human Services. "That is really a game-changer for us."

Giroir said gear and federal [health](#) care workers would begin shipping out Monday.

Health officials said they were focusing those tests on two groups: Healthcare workers and first responders, as well as those who are 65 and older with a respiratory symptom and a fever of at least 99.6 degrees. The officials implored Americans to help prioritize those two groups.

"As we expand testing resources... it's important the tests are available for the people most in need," Pence added.

Health officials stressed that an increase in testing would likely bring about a spike in confirmed cases: "The worst is yet ahead for us," said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The U.S. had 3,244 confirmed [coronavirus](#) cases across 49 states as of Sunday night, with 62 reported deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins University data dashboard.

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