

METHODIST HOSPITAL SOUTH

"Serving Humanity to Honor God"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Methodist Hospital South Prepared for COVID-19

Jourdanton, Texas - March 5, 2020 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a novel (new) strain of the usual coronavirus seen seasonally. There have been high levels of activity and interest about this new illness and concerns for its impact. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said the immediate risk to the American public is low at this time, the CDC also said the U.S. should prepare for possible disruptions to everyday life. Methodist Hospital South, in collaboration with Methodist Healthcare, South Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC), Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Region 8 and other health entities, is working tirelessly to ensure our community is prepared for not only the current state of the virus but also any future spread of COVID-19 throughout our community.

Overall preparedness efforts include reinforcing appropriate infection prevention protocols, helping to ensure there are needed supplies and equipment and provide contingency plans for staffing.

"We know the entire community is looking at us to keep them safe and healthy. We have the comprehensive safety measures in place to guarantee a safe work environment for our staff and a safe hospital for our patients and visitors during this high alert for COVID-19," stated Pam Guillory, Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Operating Officer of Methodist Hospital South. "We have Infection Prevention professionals working to further discuss preparedness within the hospital setting and community. In addition, as a Methodist Healthcare facility, we have access to HealthTrust – a large medical supply group that can supply necessary personal protective equipment to our staff," added Guillory.

In the event Methodist Hospital South would admit a patient who tests positive with COVID-19, the hospital is equipped with a negative pressure room and staff has been properly trained in emergency management situations, with an escalation plan that calls for appropriate resources, as needed. The CDC guidelines are also being followed for preparedness.

Atascosa county and surrounding areas have a low immediate health risk from COVID-19. "We need to remind our community this hospital treats patients every day with far more dangerous and deadly respiratory illnesses such as influenza, which has already caused 19 million illnesses, 180,000 hospitalizations and 10,000 deaths this season in

the U.S. alone. We believe that with certain basic preventative measures, as mentioned below, the spread of this virus can be contained, most important being hand hygiene," stated Dr. Ashwini Kumar, Chief of Staff for Methodist Hospital South.

Beginning this week, the hospital will begin screening all visitors to help reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses and better protect the health of Methodist Hospital South's patients, staff and the community in and around Atascosa County.

The community can protect their own health as well as the health of their family members and neighbors by remembering those actions that we should always take:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue
- Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often, using either soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel for at least 20 seconds
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

For more information, please visit:

- CDC COVID-19 page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Department of State Health Services Coronavirus Call Center at 1.877.570.9779.