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Cattaraugus County Health Department, OGH to expand COVID-19 testing

Officials at Olean General Hospital and the Cattaraugus County Health Department have announced plans to dramatically increase COVID-19 testing across the county. Beginning Friday, any county resident will be able to obtain a COVID-19 antigen (swab) test whether or not they are symptomatic for COVID-19. The expanded testing is designed to better track and understand the spread of the virus and to address Gov. Cuomo's requirements for reopening the region's economy.

"The expanded testing is designed to accommodate anyone in Cattaraugus County who wishes to be tested for COVID-19," said Dr. Kevin D. Watkins, public health director, Cattaraugus County Health Department. [Only residents that are symptomatic will have to be quarantined.]

"Clearly, we need to increase the number of COVID-19 tests," Dr. Watkins said. "Testing is the only way we get a realistic view of the spread of the virus in our region. To date, 1,227 residents have been tested out of the 76,000 people living in the county. That is not enough."

Jeff Zewe, president and CEO of Olean General Hospital and Bradford Regional Medical Center, member hospitals of Upper Allegheny Health System, said OGH will partner with the health department to get the word out. He also said Olean General will begin offering antigen testing to all its employees. "We have been at the forefront of employee and patient safety throughout this pandemic," Zewe said. "We are currently offering antibody testing to all employees. Adding antigen testing for staff and the community will help build employee and community confidence."

Zewe said the expanded testing was made possible by Kaleida Health furnishing 600 test kits to the Cattaraugus County Department of Health.

Dr. Watkins said increased testing is also a key part of clearing the way for the region to reopen. Under Gov. Cuomo's mandate, in order for a region to reopen as a whole, it must be testing on a level of 30 people per 1,000 population. Cattaraugus County is part of the Western New York region, along with Chautauqua, Allegany, Erie and Niagara counties.

"The community needs to understand that the Western New York region, including Cattaraugus County, will not reopen unless certain metrics are met, including meeting the required testing levels. We are testing approximately 30 per day. We need to be at 120 per day," said Dr. Watkins.

Zewe said UAHS will also assist with engaging business and community leaders in an awareness campaign to encourage everyone to get tested for COVID-19. "We want everyone to get tested as a health and safety issue first, but also to assist having our region reopen, get people back to work and get the economy moving," Zewe said.

Testing locations include:

Cattaraugus County Department of Health drive through testing sites located at:

Allegany/Limestone School Bus Garage, 104 Maple Ave, Allegany

Cattaraugus/Little Valley bus garage, 9447 Pleasant Valley, Little Valley

Wellnow Urgent Care, 921 Wayne St, Olean

 All testing requires pre-registration and an appointment time. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

To register for testing go to www.cattco.org/covid-19-test or call 716-938-9119.
After registration, you will be contacted to schedule your testing time and location.