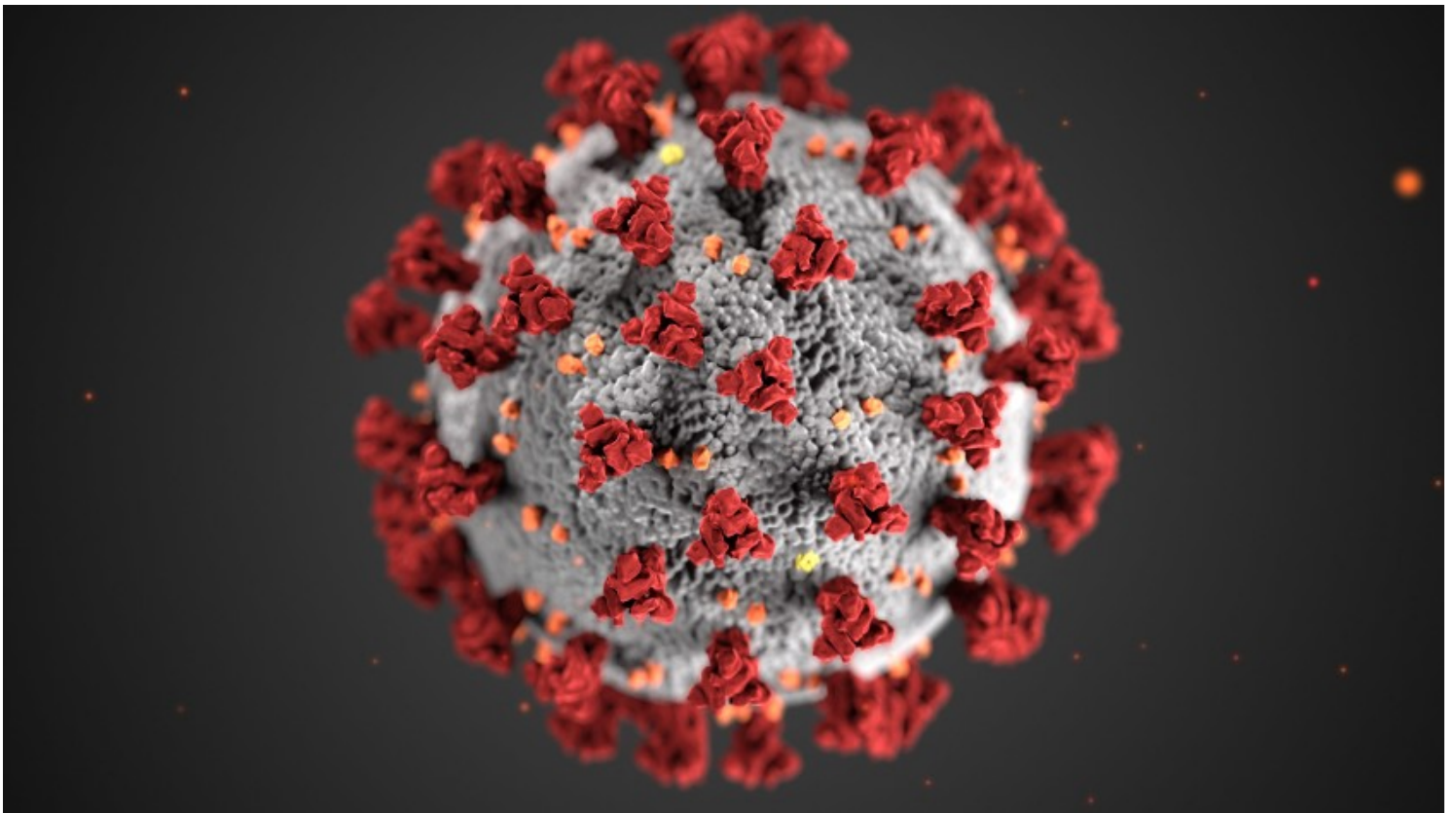


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NEWS

Ramona COVID-19 cases confirmed



This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. Note the spikes that adorn the outer surface of the virus, which impart the look of a corona surrounding the virion, when viewed electron microscopically. A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). (CDC / Alissa Eckert/CDC / Alissa Eckert)

Officials report that two of the county's corona virus cases are local residents

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The county of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has confirmed two Ramona residents as testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)—less than 1 percent of the total 213 cases combined across the county’s incorporated cities and unincorporated areas as of press time, March 24.

It is unknown at this time where the two residents tested positive or if they are currently hospitalized or at home in Ramona. However, it is confirmed that the two cases were not at NCHS Ramona Health Center.

“An Oceanside clinic had one positive case and staff members exposed are now at home for two weeks, which is NCHS’s current protocol,” NCHS Associate Medical Officer Denise Gomez, M.D., told the *Sentinel*.

As news of the two Ramona cases became known, people in the community have aired concern as to how they would know if they had been in contact with them.

While those in direct contact will have been informed and directed to stay home, complying with the overarching national, state and county mandate for everyone to shelter-in-place whether healthy or sick, Gomez said it is understandable that people in Ramona may be concerned.

“Wondering and worried goes to the issue of universal protection—it’s completely understandable. But everyone at this point has to assume that they *have* been in contact with someone who has the virus,” Gomez advised.

“You can’t ever say who exposed it to who when you’re out and about. It’s why it is so important to shelter in place, practice social distancing, and follow instructions from the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], the state, city and your health care providers,” she emphasized.

At NCHS Ramona Health Center (RHC), 220 Rotanzi St., escalated precautions are being taken, as they are at all NCHS clinics across the county and at health care provider locations everywhere.

“We’re being hyper-alert to protect staff and patients,” said Gomez, “having providers at high risk triaging patients by phone and doing visits over the phone. We’re also minimizing the number of staff at the clinics to both protect them and patients and be in compliance with shelter-in-place, though health care staff are exempt as critical workers.”

Should you call NCHS RHC and be diagnosed as potentially having symptoms of coronavirus, Gomez said you would be sent to NCHS clinics in San Marcos and Oceanside to be tested, as the Ramona clinic does not have tests.

“We are only testing high-risk patients—for example, those with compromised or suppressed immune systems or HIV, or who’ve traveled to high-risk areas. We have very limited tests and don’t have enough supplies,” Gomez added. “It’s why we’re consolidating protective supplies at just the two sites.”

NCHS has also canceled its Saturday clinic in Ramona and limited hours to Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. “We’re rotating staff through and focusing on phone appointments, but we can do Saturday hours if needed.”

Gomez noted that “supplies are definitely a problem,” and that what NCHS and all health care centers are doing is consolidation, and also following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control about re-using masks.

“The city and state are making sure supplies get to different health clinic areas, and we are making sure that if our supplies are low that we get some,” Gomez said. “But, of course, we don’t know what’s going to happen as we see cases going up—and most people do have some fear.”

Gomez implored that if you think you have symptoms, “*stay home*, call your care provider who will say what to do, isolate yourself if sick, and don’t share things like utensils, plates or towels.”

The key, she said, is to adhere to health protocols, social distancing, and keep washing your hands.

For updated community breakdown of COVID-19 cases countywide, go to coronavirus-sd.com.

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