

**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2020 6:09 PM

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19



## From the Desk of the Commissioner



**U.S. FOOD & DRUG  
ADMINISTRATION**

Dear Colleagues,

As we settle into a new kind of normal for the upcoming weeks, I want to pause for just a moment to tell you that the health and well-being of our FDA family remains of paramount concern to all of us on the FDA leadership team.

By now you have heard that the President announced new guidelines for the American people to follow which will aid in the effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. I strongly support following these guidelines and encourage you to disseminate this information to family and friends: [Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#). We all have a responsibility to help prevent the spread of this virus and help to #FlattenTheCurve.

During this time, communication from FDA leadership is critical and you can count on us to do so. Effective immediately I am directing all telework-eligible employees, including staff participating on a temporary basis, to begin teleworking. While this does not apply to those carrying out non-portable activities, such as our lab activities or the monitoring of imported products, as many FDA employees as possible should be in a telework status for the next few weeks.

In addition to protecting the health of our staff and their families, the leadership team has stayed laser focused on ensuring our workforce remains healthy to carry out the FDA's critical public health mission to keep Americans safe. As part of our preparedness efforts, we began increasing telework and testing our IT systems last week. Thank you for your patience as we continue to troubleshoot our IT systems to maintain continuity.

We all know this outbreak has proven to be a dynamic and constantly evolving situation. Our COVID-19 response effort would not be possible without the critical role of FDA in trying to prevent and slow the spread of the disease, including by assisting repatriated Americans, protecting the supply of food, drugs, and devices, and facilitating the development of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.

A tremendous amount of work already has been done on all fronts and levels of our organization, with a focus on diagnostics over these past several weeks. We know that diagnostics are the first and most important tool in understanding the epidemiology of a disease outbreak. But the focus on diagnostics will quickly turn to therapeutics, the food supply, and other critical areas that all fall under the FDA portfolio. We have been working in parallel to expedite the development of critical, safe and effective medical countermeasures to treat COVID-19, and ensuring these treatments are available as quickly as possible to protect public health. We are rising up to every ask, every need and every challenge by quickly adapting to the situation, thinking creatively, being flexible—and proactively leaning in to do what is needed for public health.

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At no moment have I lost sight of the fact that even in the face of this uncertain time, FDA employees have taken an all hands on deck stance to do everything in our power to strike down this virus. It is truly an honor to serve with you, and we will get through this together, because we are #FDAStrong. I will be in touch soon. Please take care of yourselves and your families.

Sincerely,

**Stephen M. Hahn, M.D.**  
**Commissioner of Food and Drugs**

