

After what appeared to be the beginning of a downward trend, Arkansas had its highest ever recording of new COVID-19 cases, with the total now surpassing 22,000.

The state saw 878 new cases, a number that more than doubles the number of new cases announced on Wednesday. The total number of coronavirus cases is now 22,075. Of the total number of cases, 6,098 are considered active, an increase from yesterday, when the state saw its first day of fewer active cases in days.

The death toll increased by two for a total of 279. Hospitalizations continue their downward trend, decreasing by three for a total of 272.

Speaking during the governor's daily briefing on the pandemic on Thursday, Health Secretary Dr. Nate Smith said though hospitalizations are doing down, due to the number of new cases, they will likely increase again.

Smith also spoke on the ideal window to test someone for COVID-19 as testing someone before they exhibit symptoms could lead to a false negative test because the virus levels are not high enough to be detected yet.

**NEWS06****:23****“...too early”**

“If someone who's been exposed to someone, say someone in your family tested positive. You say, ‘Well, I want to know, am I infected?’ so you go and you get a test, it comes back negative, you say ‘Great, I have a negative test result.’ Well, you still could be infected. And that's why someone in that setting needs to be quarantined for 14 days because we may have just tested them too early,” Smith said.

This record-breaking number of cases comes days before the Fourth of July, holiday. When asked if the state is looking into additional measures to further curb the spread of the coronavirus in the state, Gov. Asa Hutchinson said the state thinks about that every day.

**NEWS07****:20****“...of Arkansas”**

“The key of course is the identification of the virus, which is the testing. It is the follow-up through contact tracing and the isolation. That strategy is effective we just have to continue to implement that, along with the individual discipline of each resident of Arkansas.”

Arkansas still does not have a statewide mandate requiring the wearing of facemasks, nor is it allowing counties and cities to pass stricter restrictions than what is on the statewide level.