

Arkansas added over 500 new coronavirus cases today (Thursday) as the start date for schools is fewer than 5 days away.

The state saw 549 new cases, bringing the state's total to 54,765. Of those total cases, 5,666 are considered active according to the state Department of Health.

The number of hospitalizations in the state neither increased nor decreased, staying the same at 499. 10 more Arkansans have died from the coronavirus, bringing the death toll to 641.

The state reported 6,898 tests over the past 24 hours. The state also recorded a cumulative total of 10,358 antigen tests.

Speaking during the daily briefing on the pandemic today (Wednesday), Health Secretary Dr. José Romero spoke on the importance of quarantining when you get a COVID-19 test, even if that test returns as negative.

NEWS08**:17****“...been infected”**

“It only means that the virus has decided to make enough of itself so that we can detect it. So if I test today, and I had been exposed five days beforehand, that does not mean that I've not been infected”

With schools preparing for digital and in-person instruction next week, Gov. Asa Hutchinson spoke on new data available from Arkansas Center for Health Improvement that tiers the level of COVID-19 risk in each school district.

NEWS09**:16****“...county level”**

Schools are expected to start between August 24 and 26.