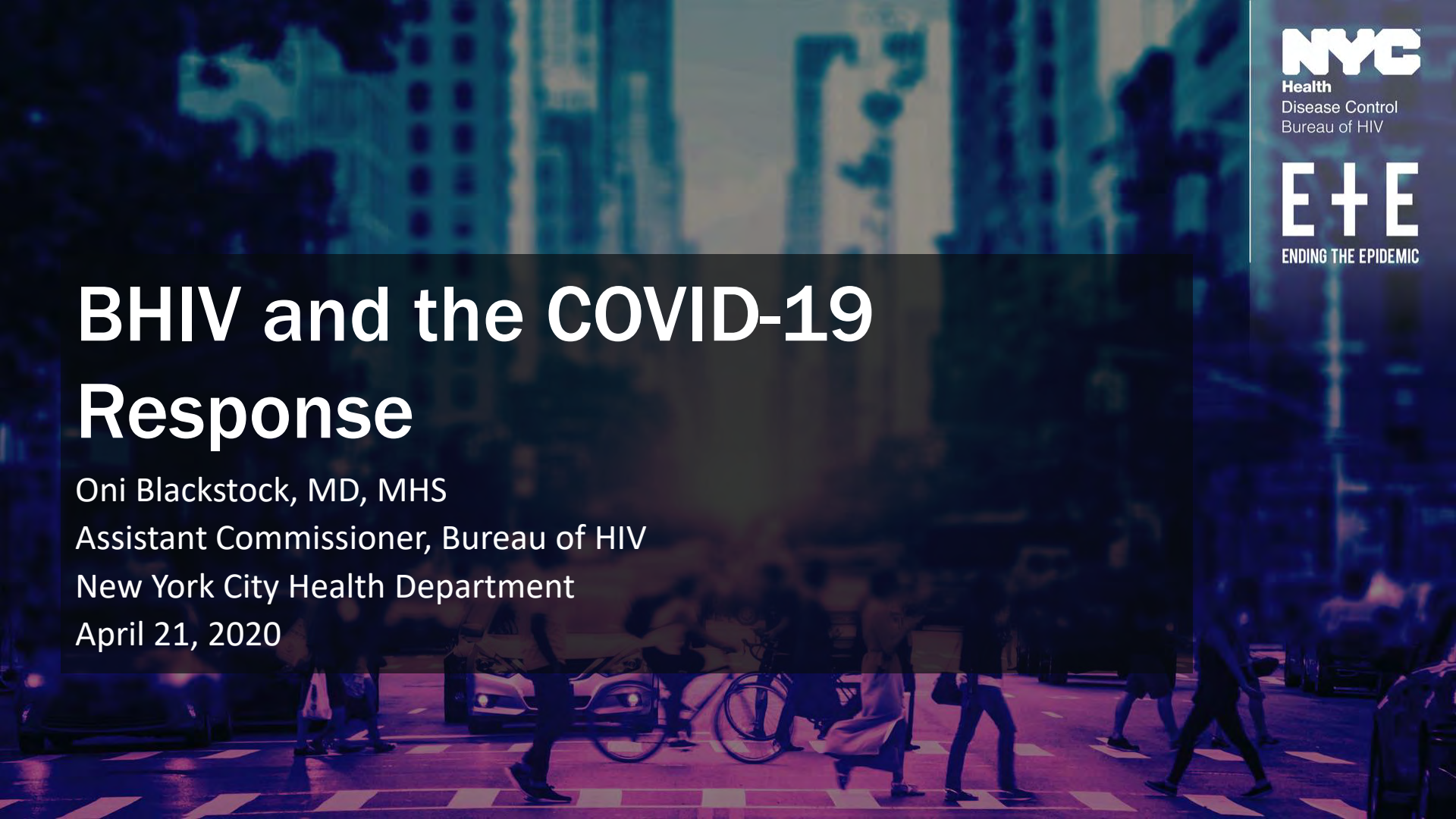


NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

ENDING THE EPIDEMIC

BHIV and the COVID-19 Response

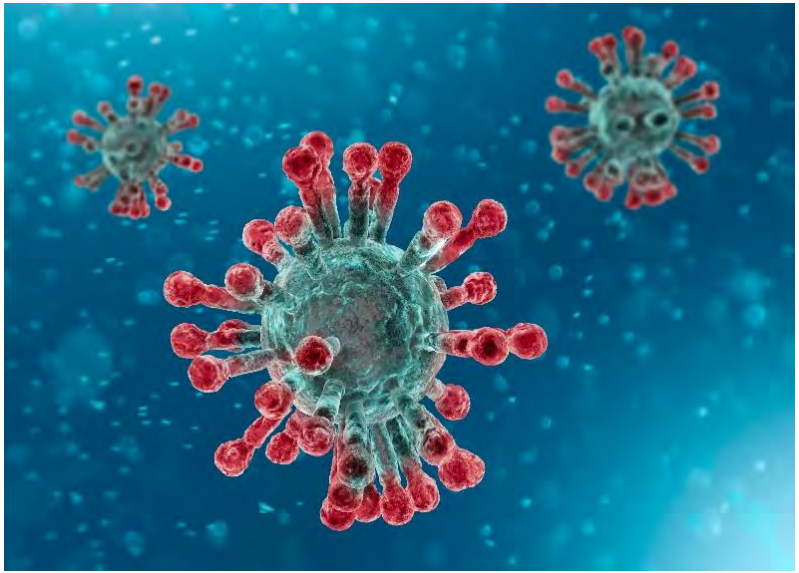
Oni Blackstock, MD, MHS
Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of HIV
New York City Health Department
April 21, 2020

Where we are

- We are in the midst of a global pandemic of a novel coronavirus illness, COVID-19
- There is widespread community transmission in New York City
- Over the next few months, a large proportion of New Yorkers will get sick with COVID-19
- Our health care system is being tested as it never has before
- DOHMH's role is to slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick

What Are Coronaviruses?

- Large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe illness
- The name “coronavirus” comes from its crown shape
- A novel coronavirus is a type of coronavirus that was not previously found in humans



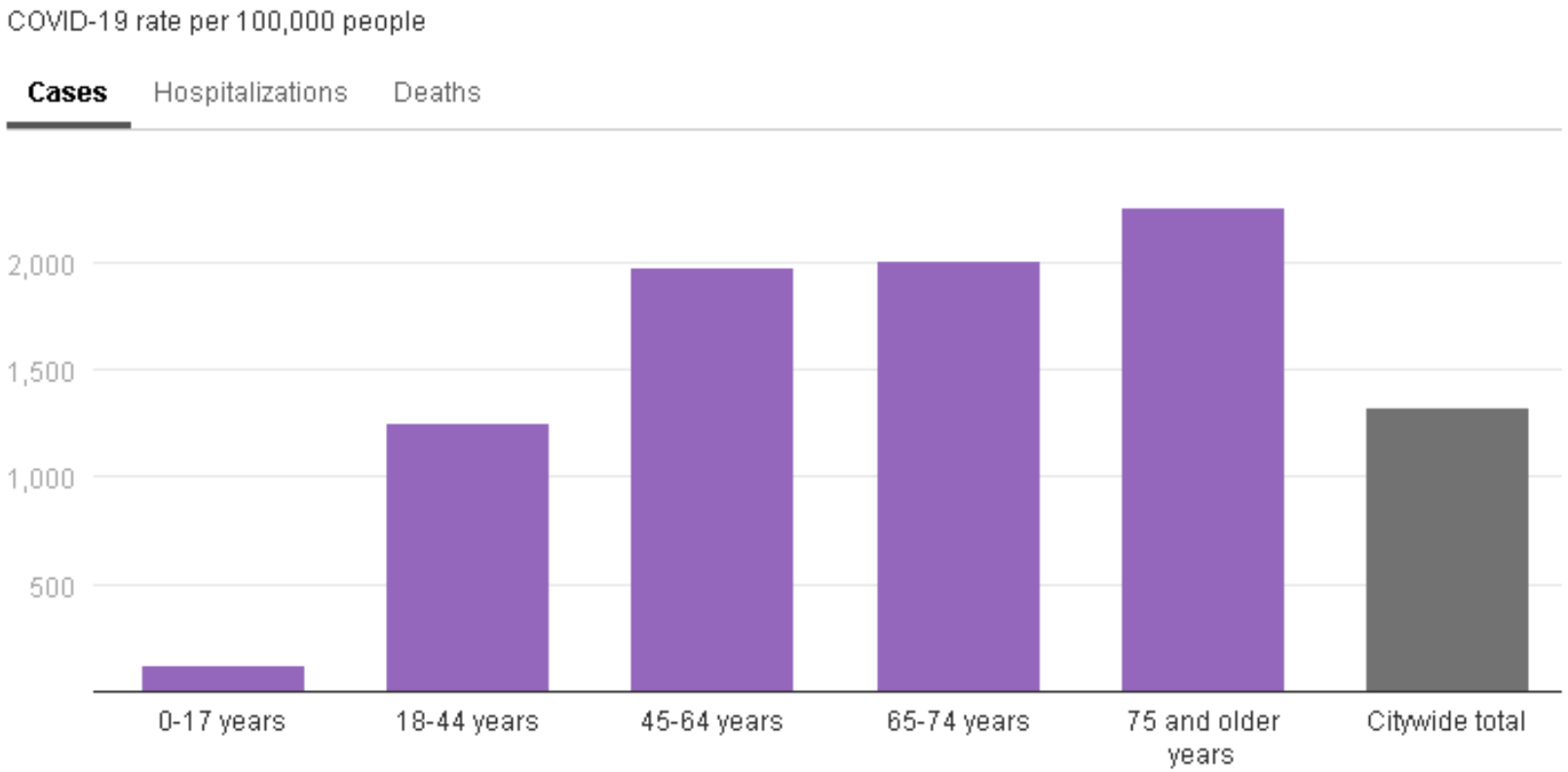
What Is COVID-19?

- Outbreak of respiratory disease that began in Wuhan, China
- Identified December 2019
- Originated in animals and infected humans who came in contact at a live animal market in Wuhan
- Testing by scientists revealed a new coronavirus
- Disease caused by this virus known was named "**COVID-19**"

What Are the Symptoms and Treatment of COVID-19?

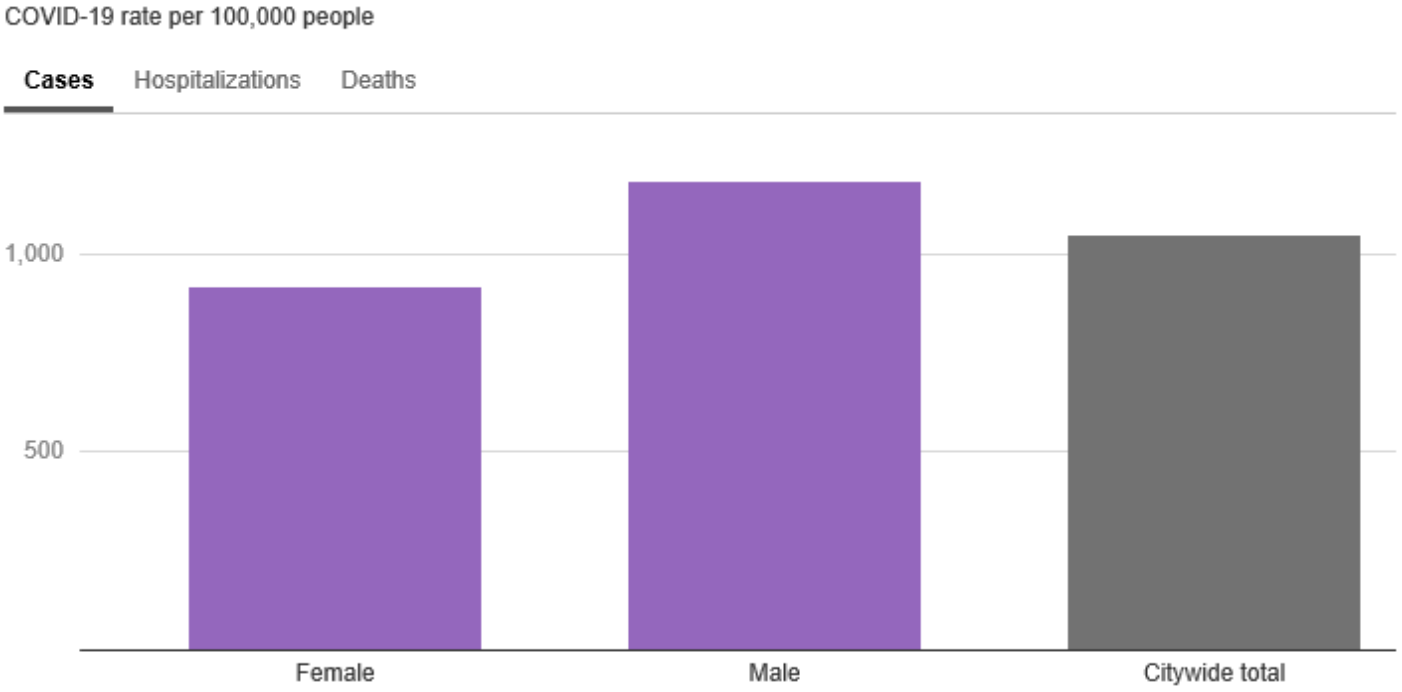
- **Symptoms** range from asymptomatic (no symptoms), to mild, to severely ill and can include:
  - Fever
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath
  - Sore throat
- **Incubation period**, the period between exposure to infection and appearance of the first symptoms, estimated to be 2 to 14 days after exposure
- **There is currently no vaccine or treatment available**
  - Medication and vaccine research is underway

COVID-19 Case Rate by Age in NYC



NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

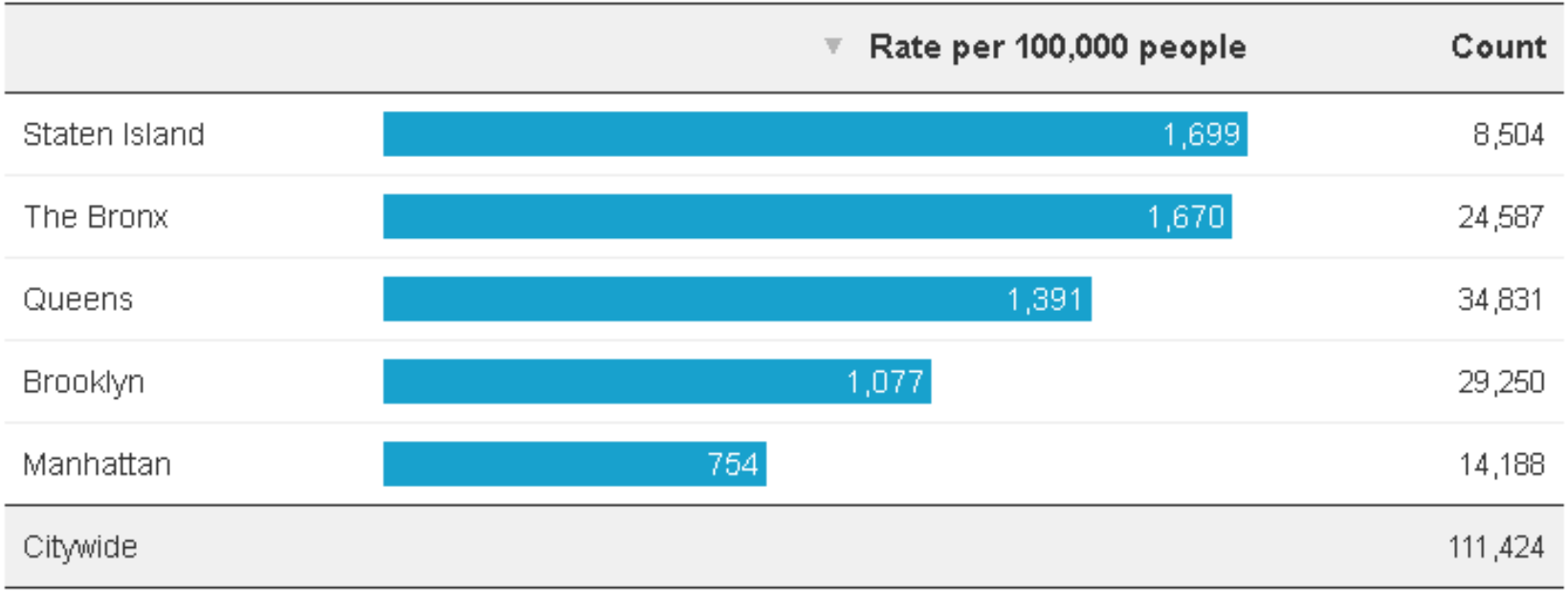
COVID-19 Case Rate by Sex in NYC



Note: Due to the small number of cases among transgender and gender-nonconforming people, data on those cases are not included in this table at this time.

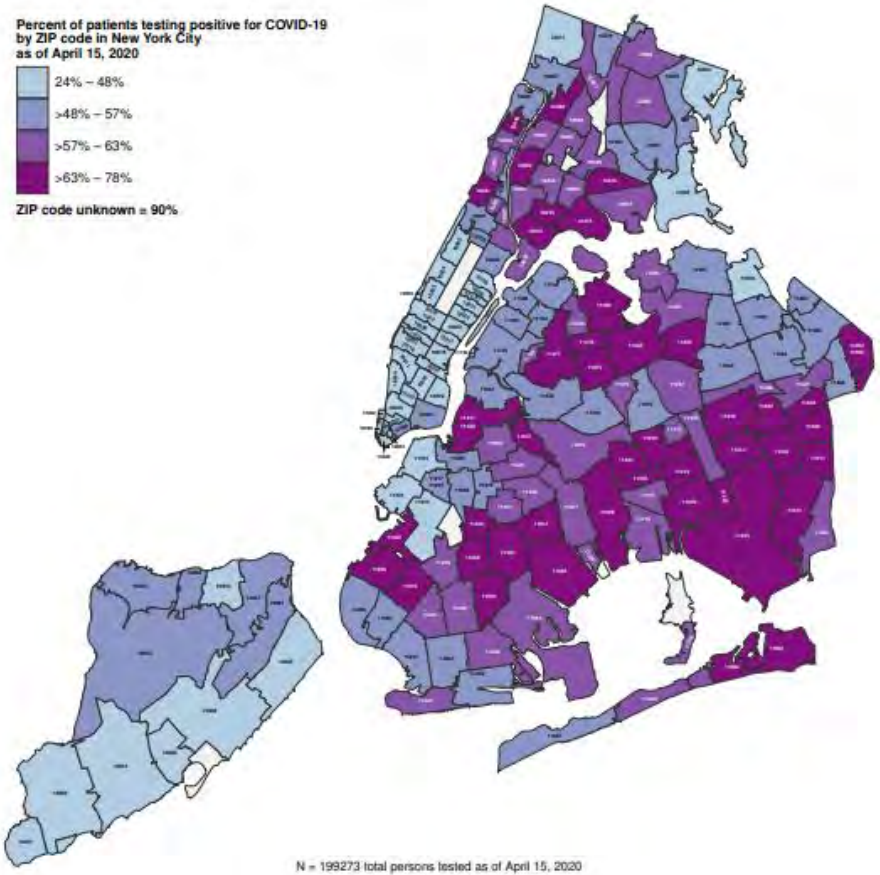
COVID-19 Cases by Borough

This chart shows the number of positive cases per 100,000 people in each borough. It indicates the spread of COVID-19 relative to each borough's population.



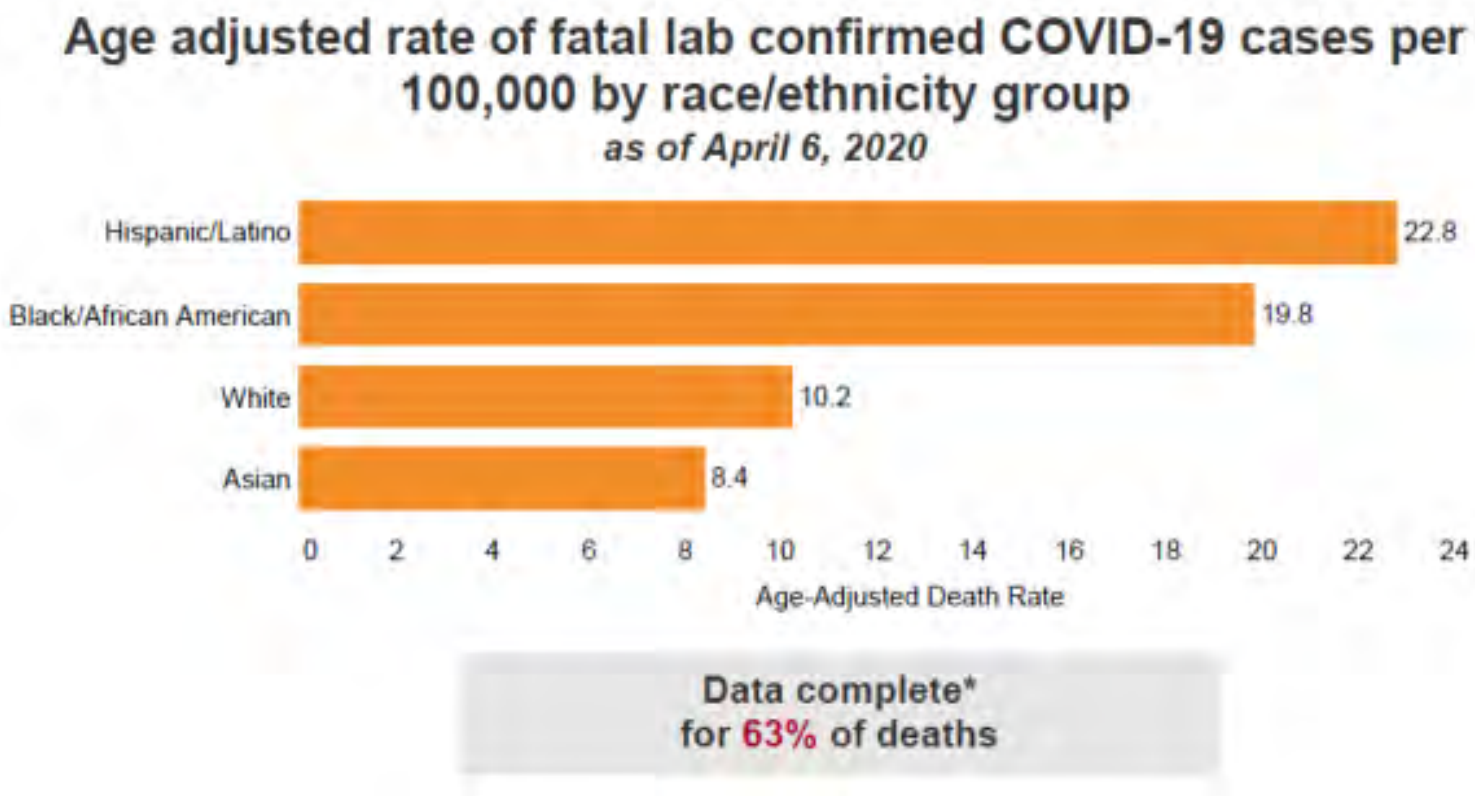
	Rate per 100,000 people	Count
Staten Island	1,699	8,504
The Bronx	1,670	24,587
Queens	1,391	34,831
Brooklyn	1,077	29,250
Manhattan	754	14,188
Citywide		111,424

Percent of Patients Testing Positive by Zip Code in NYC



NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

Death Rate by Race/Ethnicity in NYC



NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

Who Is Most At Risk?

- **With community transmission, all New Yorkers are at risk**
- **The following groups are more at risk of severe illness:**
  - People 50 years of age and older
  - People who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system
- **We do not yet have data to determine whether HIV is an independent risk factor for severe illness from COVID-19**
  - We are in the process of gathering that data

NYC Health Department Response

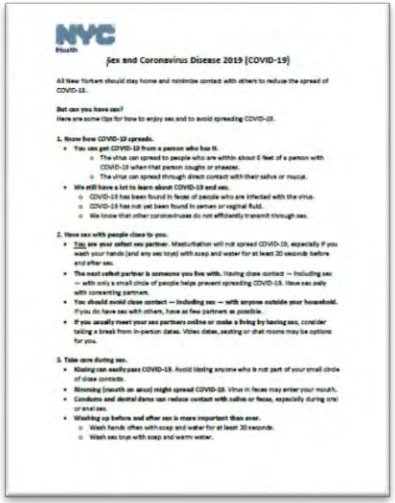
DOHMH's role is to provide guidance to the City that results in the best possible protection of the health care system so that it is able to take care of people affected by COVID-19.

NYC Health Department Response

- Enhanced **surveillance** to track disease spread
- **Educate** the public through webinars, virtual town halls, social media, guidance documents, and ad campaigns
- **Provide guidance** to doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare facilities
- **Laboratory testing** at NYC Health Department Public Health Laboratory
- **Plan for surge** in cases and increased healthcare needs
  - Assist with distribution of medical equipment
  - Build volunteer and paid healthcare workforce
  - Assist with setting up auxiliary hospital spaces (e.g., Javits Center)

Developing Guidance for Providers, PWH & the General Public

Sex and Coronavirus Disease 2019



Sex and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

All New Yorkers should stay home and minimize contact with others to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

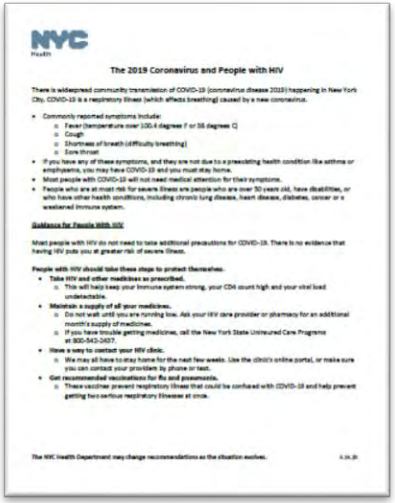
But can you have sex?
Here are some tips for how to enjoy sex and to avoid spreading COVID-19.

1. Know how COVID-19 spreads.
- You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it.
  - The virus can spread to people who are within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes.
  - The virus can spread through direct contact with their saliva or mucus.
- We still have a lot to learn about COVID-19 and sex.
  - COVID-19 has been found in feces of people who are infected with the virus.
  - COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid.
  - We know that other coronaviruses do not efficiently transmit through sex.

2. Have sex with people close to you.
- You are your safest sex partner. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sex.
- The next safest partner is someone you live with. Having close contact — including sex — with only a small circle of people helps prevent spreading COVID-19. Have sex only with consenting partners.
- You should avoid close contact — including sex — with anyone outside your household. If you do have sex with others, have as few partners as possible.
- If you usually meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex, consider taking a break from in-person dates. Video dates, sexting or chat rooms may be options for you.

3. Take care during sex.
- Kissing can easily pass COVID-19. Avoid kissing anyone who is not part of your small circle of close contacts.
- Rimming (mouth on anus) might spread COVID-19. Virus in feces may enter your mouth.
- Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces, especially during oral or anal sex.
- Washing up before and after sex is more important than ever.
  - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Wash sex toys with soap and warm water.

2019 Coronavirus and People with HIV



The 2019 Coronavirus and People with HIV

There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) happening in New York City. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness (which affects breathing) caused by a new coronavirus.

- Commonly reported symptoms include:
  - Fever (temperature over 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C)
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
  - Sore throat
- If you have any of these symptoms, and they are not due to a preexisting health condition like asthma or emphysema, you may have COVID-19 and you must stay home.
- Most people with COVID-19 will not need medical attention for their symptoms.
- People who are at most risk for severe illness are people who are over 50 years old, have disabilities, or who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.

Guidance for People With HIV

Most people with HIV do not need to take additional precautions for COVID-19. There is no evidence that having HIV puts you at greater risk of severe illness.

People with HIV should take these steps to protect themselves.
- Take HIV and other medicines as prescribed.
  - This will help keep your immune system strong, your CD4 count high and your viral load undetectable.
- Maintain a supply of all your medicines.
  - Do not wait until you are running low. Ask your HIV care provider or pharmacy for an additional month's supply of medicines.
  - If you have trouble getting medicines, call the New York State Uninsured Care Programs at 800-542-2437.
- Have a way to contact your HIV clinic.
  - We may all have to stay home for the next few weeks. Use the clinic's online portal, or make sure you can contact your providers by phone or text.
- Get recommended vaccinations for flu and pneumonia.
  - These vaccines prevent respiratory illness that could be confused with COVID-19 and help prevent getting two serious respiratory illnesses at once.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

NYS + NYC Dear Colleague Letter

Department of Health

Novel Coronavirus and People with HIV

Dear Colleague,

The New York City Health Department and the New York State Department of Health have received questions from HIV care providers about whether there are any specific concerns for people with HIV related to the growing outbreak of novel coronavirus and COVID-19 respiratory disease.

At this moment, people with HIV should follow the same guidance as the general population, and do not need to take additional precautions. Please see New York City's guidance for health care providers and the public, and New York State's guidance for providers and the public.

To date, the main risk factors for severe COVID-19 are older age and co-morbidities including cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory or cardiovascular disease. HIV infection has not specifically been identified as a risk factor, but would be included when guidance refers generally to immune-compromised individuals.

Providers and the public should follow the latest CDC guidance. People who had contact with a person with COVID-19 or traveled to an affected area and, in the following 14 days, experience fever, cough, or shortness of breath should call their medical provider. Other people who experience mild illness should stay home. Providers should consider evaluating patients with fever and lower respiratory illness that requires hospitalization for possible COVID-19. Follow updated CDC guidance on who should be evaluated for COVID-19.

Clinics and providers can take steps to prepare for a wider outbreak. Clinics should be proactive to be able to both respond to a wider coronavirus public health emergency and to maintain their capacity to provide HIV care and treatment. This includes establishing a plan for telemedicine* or other mechanisms for providing patient care remotely. Providers should continue to support patients with HIV to achieve and maintain viral suppression; ensure that patients have received recommended influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations; talk to patients about maintaining their supply of medications; and encourage them to maintain social networks remotely.

The coronavirus outbreak is rapidly evolving. Our health departments will share any updates to specific guidance for people with HIV.

Sincerely,

Oni Blackstock, MD, MHS
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of HIV
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Charles Gonzalez, MD
Medical Director
AIDS Institute
New York State Department of Health

* See telehealth guidance for telehealth services.

NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

Postponed BHIV Activities and Events

- #OurStoriesNYC Showcase
- ACE Annual Meeting
- Capacity Building Assistance Projects
- Chemsex Forum
- DSRIP HIV Coalition Meeting
- HIV Long-Term Survivor Town Hall
- iART Detailing Launch
- National HIV Testing Day
- NHBS Trans Cycle Stakeholder Meeting
- PlaySure Network Provider Meeting
- PS19-1906 Community Engagement Sessions
- T-TAP Trainings
- Women's Health and Activism Summit

Supporting Community Agencies

BHIV is continuing to support community agencies by

- Maintaining regular contact and offering technical assistance
- Assisting with telehealth initiation
- Providing continual funding

Care and Treatment Program

Authorized a set of temporary changes to contracts to ensure service continuity for people living with HIV (PLWH) in the Ryan White Part A (RWPA) program and prioritize the health and safety of program staff, clients, and the community including:

- **Programs may substitute videoconferencing or telephone contact for face to face encounters wherever possible**
- **The Health Department and PHS will consider the impact of COVID-19 on programs' ability to meet targets and pay for costs of the programs.**
- **Plans for corrective action and determination of status have been suspended**
- **Caps on meals per client per week have been lifted**
- **Programs may mail vouchers to clients or use vouchers to order food for clients for home delivery**
- **Congregate meal programs have transitioned to distributing meals to-go**

Care and Treatment and Housing programs are working with the Planning Council to expand capacity for food and nutrition services, housing and, possibly Emergency Financial Assistance.

Clinical Operation and Technical Assistance Program

- Start up work for new HRSA-20-078 *Ending the Epidemic* grant, **P**lanned **R**es**O**urces for a **S**pecific **P**opulation-level **E**quitable **R**esponse (Project PROSPER)
  - Request for Proposals (RFP) development to support HIV clinics: 1) replicate evidence-informed interventions focused on priority populations and 2) implement enhanced data-to-care (eD2C) approaches to engage and reengage priority populations outside of the clinical setting
  - Developing new trainings (including e-learning opportunities) focused on the Treatment and Respond pillars
- NYC HIV Clinic Survey development
- Virtual Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) technical assistance to Health Departments and CBOs in Northeast U.S.

HIV Epidemiology Program

- **Assess-Connect-Engage (ACE) Team**
  - Interviewing newly diagnosed and out of care clients and their partners virtually
  - Staff are keeping track of organizations still seeing patients and linking clients to services
- **Surveillance Unit**
  - Operations to do remote data collection for case investigation through RHIOs are getting up and running
  - Staff are maintaining their relationships with medical providers through phone calls and helping them identify COVID-19 resources from DOHMH
- **Special studies (Medical Monitoring Project and National HIV Behavioral Surveillance)**
  - Participant interviews by phone/videoconferencing, and medical record abstractions for MMP
  - Formative interviews by phone/videoconferencing for NHBS

Racial Equity and Social Justices Initiatives

- Supporting activities of new DOHMH COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force
- Continued co-leadership of federal *Ending the Epidemic* planning and implementation grants (CDC 19-1906, HRSA-20-078)
- Orientation and strategic planning with staff beginning new BHIV equity-focused positions
  - Senior Manager, Racial Equity Technical Assistance, Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiatives Program
  - Director of Health Equity, BHIV Care and Treatment Program
  - Senior Health Equity Specialist, BHIV Care and Treatment Program

Policy and External Affairs

BHIV continues to track **local, state, and federal policy activity related to COVID-19**, focusing on policies most relevant to New Yorkers affected by HIV. These include:

- State Executive Order increasing access to most prescription and over-the-counter medications for ADAP and Medicaid recipients, and allowing prescription transfers to more accessible Medicaid-participating pharmacies;
- New York State on PAUSE Executive Order, including "Matilda's Law," which protects older people, people with compromised immune systems, and people with underlying illnesses; and
- Federal emergency relief legislation intended to provide emergency funding for federal agencies, and emergency assistance and health care for individuals, families, and businesses affected by COVID-19.

For more information or inquiries on COVID-19 policy activity, contact Adrian Guzman, Director, Policy and External Affairs, BHIV, at aguzman2@health.nyc.gov.

Policy and External Affairs

BHIV is working with the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York to maintain a **regularly updated list of COVID-19 resources** for New Yorkers, including:

- COVID-19 Information from New York City Health Department, New York State Department of Health, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Local government resources in New York City, and in Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester Counties;
- State government resources;
- Federal government resources;
- Non-governmental resources; and
- Wellness resources.

The list is available at https://nyhiv.org/covid-19-information-for-people-living-with-hiv/.

Prevention Program

- Per executive order, NY State on PAUSE through April 29, 2020
  - For DOHMH-funded contracts, fee-for-service reimbursement suspended, at least through April 30, 2020
    - Cost-based reimbursement of contracts
- Guidance to contractors
  - Clinical sites to provide services using telemedicine, where appropriate
  - Community-based organizations to conduct outreach virtually
  - DOHMH hosted two learning collaboratives for contracts last Friday
  - Working on creating a document that summarizes services provided by funded Prevention programs

Prevention Program

- PEP Hotline: 844-3-PEPNYC (844-373-7692)
- Virtual Community Home Test Giveaway (CHTG)
  - Partner agencies promote CHTG initiative through online and virtual outreach (social media, text messaging, email newsletters)
  - Provide interested clients with online coupon codes to order a free home HIV test kit to the address of their choice

Social Marketing and Community Engagement Program

- Updated NYC Health Map to only show safer sex product distribution from venues that are open
- Working to change NYC Condom distribution model from a community one to one that also includes delivering to individuals' homes
  - This requires a review of the program's DCAS contract
  - Updating ordering modalities on the NYC Condom Safer Sex Portal
- Working with BHIV (and other Bureaus) to update their webpages with COVID-19 specific language
- Working with contractors to develop digital advertising, engagement and recruitment

Sexual Health Clinics

- All locations are currently closed except Chelsea

- Chelsea - 303 Ninth Avenue, Manhattan
    - Emergency walk-in services for PEP and JumpstART
    - More information and hours of operation:

    https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/sexual-health-clinics.page

- Sexual Health Clinic Hotline
    - Telemedicine services for STIs including HIV
    - Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm
    - **347-396-7959**

NYC Health
Disease Control
Bureau of HIV

What can you do to help protect yourself?

- Shelter-in-place if you have available shelter
- Maintain social distancing if you have to go outside (go outside only for essentials)
- Use telemedicine visits if available
  - Weigh risks and benefits of attending clinic
- Wear face coverings outside
- Practice good hygiene
  - Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds
  - Avoiding touching your face or shaking hands with others
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes (with a tissue or sleeve)
- Ensure have ample medication supply (up to 90-day supply if possible)
  - So far no reports of HIV medication shortage

New York City Health Department COVID-19 Resources

COVID-19 main webpage: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page

New York City COVID-19 Citywide Information Portal: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/index.page

Other resources:

- "Stay Home, New Yorkers: What You Need to Know Now About COVID-19" (FAQ/fact sheet): https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/coronavirus-factsheet.pdf
- Dear Colleague COVID-19 Updated Guidance and Scientific Literature: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-providers-dear-colleague-updates-04132020.pdf
- Guidance on COVID-19 and people with HIV: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-guidance-for-people-with-hiv.pdf
- Dear Colleague Letter on COVID-19 and people with HIV: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-hiv-providers.pdf
- Guidance on sex and COVID-19: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-sex-guidance.pdf

New York State Department of Health COVID-19 Resources

COVID-19 main webpage: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home

New York City COVID-19 Citywide Information Portal: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/index.page

Other resources:

- "Protect Yourself and Your Family from Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)": https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/protect-yourself-and-your-family-coronavirus-covid-19
- COVID-19 Testing: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-testing
- COVID-19 Information for Providers: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/information-healthcare-providers
- Dear Colleague letter on HIV testing, HIV treatment, PrEP, and hepatitis C screening during COVID-19 response: https://www.hivguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/NYSDOH-PDF/Dear-Colleague_HIV-PrEP-HCV-during-COVID_CJG-and-CJH_3-27-2020_final.pdf

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- COVID-19 main webpage: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- "What to Know about HIV and COVID-19": https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/hiv.html

Coronavirus.gov (White House/CDC)

- COVID-19 main webpage: https://www.coronavirus.gov/

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

- COVID-19 main webpage: https://www.hrsa.gov/coronavirus
- HRSA, HIV/AIDS Bureau, Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program FAQs: https://hab.hrsa.gov/coronavirus-frequently-asked-questions

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Resources

HIV.gov

- COVID-19 and people with HIV: https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/staying-in-hiv-care/other-related-health-issues/coronavirus-covid-19

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

- COVID-19 main webpage: https://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus
- Interim guidance for COVID-19 and people with HIV: https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines/html/8/covid-19-and-persons-with-hiv--interim-guidance-/554/interim-guidance-for-covid-19-and-persons-with-hiv

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- COVID-19 main webpage: https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus

Resources

Nongovernmental Organizations

- Avert – COVID-19 and HIV: https://www.avert.org/coronavirus/covid19-HIV
- International AIDS Society – COVID-19 and HIV: What You Need to Know: https://www.iasociety.org/covid-19-hiv
- NASTAD – COVID-19 Updates and Resources: https://www.nastad.org/resource/covid-19-updates-and-resources
- World Health Organization – Q & A on COVID-19, HIV, and Antiretrovirals: https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-hiv-and-antiretrovirals