



AS IT IS

South Korea OKs Single Test for COVID-19 and Flu

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Health officials in South Korea have approved a new test for the disease COVID-19. The test can identify both signs of COVID-19 and seasonal **influenza** from the same blood **samples**.

Officials say the exam could help prevent problems at hospitals as the medical community continues battling the coronavirus.

As the COVID-19 health crisis stretches into the flu season, South Korea, like most nations, has struggled to control the virus. Some experts are warning that the virus could spread easily during cold weather when people spend more time indoors.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency reported 118 new cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday. Most of the cases were in Seoul, a densely populated city.

The number of infections nationwide is 26,925, including 474 deaths.

South Koreans have been increasingly going out in public after the government eased social distancing restrictions last month to help the weak economy.

Health officials have used **trace** contacts and other measures to control the virus, but “such efforts have been **outpaced** by the speed of viral spread,” noted Health Ministry official Yoon Taeho. Yoon spoke during a press conference.

The new test targets genes that are found in both COVID-19 and seasonal flu. The test is a more complex version of the tests that are used to identify COVID-19 from fluids taken from noses or throats. Laboratories use machines to enlarge genetic materials so that even very small amounts of the virus can be measured.

COVID-19 and the flu are hard to tell apart by their **symptoms**, said Yoon. So, getting an answer in three to six hours would help patients and “also reduce the **burden** of medical workers,” he added.

Also, on Wednesday, India’s capital New Delhi reported a record high of 6,725 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours. It is the highest number of new cases since March. New Delhi has been reporting about 5,200 infections a day this past week.

India has a total of 8.3 million cases, with 123,611 deaths from COVID-19.

In Sri Lanka, more than 200 policemen have been infected with the coronavirus as cases increase in and around the capital, Colombo. Another 2,200 officers have been **quarantined** because of the virus. Health officials have linked the infections to the country’s main fish market.

Sri Lanka’s total number of cases since March have reached 11,744, including 23 deaths. The government has ordered a curfew in the densely populated Western province. Officials have closed schools and major public offices, and banned public gatherings.

I’m Susan Shand.

The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

Words in This Story

influenza – *n.* a common virus that often affects people in the winter

sample – *n.* a small piece of something that is tested

trace – *adj.* following previous contacts with humans

outpace – *v.* to move beyond a marker

symptom – *n.* an indicator that one might be sick, a cough or fever

burden – *n.* a heavy load to carry

quarantine – *v.* to isolate someone who has a contagious disease
