



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Phoebe Begins Limited Drive-Through COVID-19 Testing; Awaits Results**

**Albany, Ga.** – Phoebe opened southwest Georgia’s first drive-through COVID-19 collection facility Monday to serve people in the health system’s service area. Patients concerned they may have contracted COVID-19 are instructed to call a hotline. Fourteen Phoebe nurses screened callers over the phone Monday. Those who met testing criteria were given an appointment time to report to the screening site. “Our nurses handled over 300 calls and scheduled 48 patients for testing today. By 4:00, we already had 30 people scheduled for tomorrow. We’re planning to extend the hours of operation on Tuesday, so we’ll be able to increase our testing capacity,” said Suresh Lakhanpal, MD, Phoebe Physicians Chief Executive Officer.

When patients drive up to the testing site, Phoebe providers, wearing personal protective equipment approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for contact with potential COVID-19 patients, take their personal information and obtain the appropriate swab. The patients do not have to get out of their cars. “We’re working to make this process as quick and efficient as possible. We’re handing out information sheets to let the patients know how to safely isolate themselves at home while they await test results, and we’ll inform them as soon as we receive those results,” Dr. Lakhanpal said.

Receiving test results has been slow. So far, Phoebe has tested 185 patients in Albany alone over the last week and has received results on just 10 patients. Eight of those patients tested positive, and two tested negative. As of Monday evening, five confirmed COVID-19 patients were being treated in Phoebe’s main hospital in Albany. Three patients were recovering at

home. Sixty patients were being cared for in the hospital as they await results. 115 are waiting for results at home, including those tested today at the drive-through site. Those numbers do not reflect Phoebe employees who have been tested because of potential exposure to COVID-19 patients. “There are a limited number of labs that can process these tests. We understand that they’re probably overwhelmed, but we have to find a way to speed up the testing process,” said Scott Steiner, Phoebe Putney Health System Chief Executive Officer.

The drive-through testing site will be open Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. “We wish we could test everyone in the community who is concerned about contracting COVID-19, but we simply don’t have the available supply of test kits to do that. We’re asking people who do not have symptoms not to call our hotline so our nurses have more time to screen people who know they have had contact with coronavirus patients and those at high risk of severe complications from the virus,” Dr. Lakhanpal said.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Most people who contract the virus suffer relatively mild symptoms that do not require hospitalization. Older individuals and those with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems are more likely to develop severe symptoms.

For the latest information on COVID-19, visit [phoebehealth.com/coronavirus](https://phoebehealth.com/coronavirus) and [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov).

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