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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **First COVID-19 Related Death Reported for Ben Hill County** *36 total COVID-19 related deaths reported in South Health District*

**Fitzgerald** - The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), South Health District has confirmed the first COVID-19 related death of a resident of Ben Hill County. The individual was a 73-year old female who was not hospitalized. It is unknown at this time if this individual had any underlying medical conditions.

“We are extremely saddened that another individual has died within our district,” said William R. Grow, MD, FACP, district health director. “We continue to encourage older individuals and individuals with underlying medical conditions or compromised immune systems to stay home and away from others as much as possible to protect themselves from this devastating disease.”

This brings the total count of confirmed COVID-19 related deaths in South Health District to 36.

To receive the most recent total case counts for any county in Georgia, please refer to the Georgia Department of Public Health’s Daily Status Update at <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report>.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is calling on all Georgians to do their part to stop further spread of this deadly virus.

**Stay home** – the Governor has issued a shelter-in-place Executive Order that should be observed by all residents and visitors.

**Practice social distancing** – keep at least 6 feet between yourself and other people.

**Wash your hands** – use soap and water and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) if soap and water aren’t readily available.

**Wear a mask** – The CDC now recommends the use of face masks to help slow the spread of COVID-19, especially where social distancing is difficult to maintain (grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.), and **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission. The CDC also advises the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

Free COVID-19 testing is available in all 10 counties across the Georgia Department of Public Health’s South Health District. The South Health District includes Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Tift and Turner Counties.

Anyone interested in being tested for COVID-19 can call their local health department or the South Health District COVID-19 Hotline to be screened and to schedule their appointment.

For accurate and reliable information about COVID-19 visit [southhealthdistrict.com/covid19](https://southhealthdistrict.com/covid19), [dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus](https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus) or [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

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*We protect lives.*