

Trump leaves hospital

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Associated Press



President Donald Trump drives past supporters gathered outside Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, on Sunday.

Anthony Peltier/AP Photo

BETHESDA, Md. — President Donald Trump said Monday he's leaving the military hospital where he has been treated for COVID-19 and will continue his recovery at the White House. He said he's feeling good and despite his attack the nation should not be afraid of the virus that has killed more than 209,000 Americans.

Trump's expected return comes after he has received an exceptionally aggressive course of treatment and a standard of care well above what is available to average Americans. His doctor, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Sean Conley, said the president would not be fully out of the woods for another week, but he said Trump had "met or exceeded all standard hospital discharge criteria."

Trump himself made a point of sounding confident. He tweeted, "I will be leaving the great Walter Reed Medical Center today at 6:30 P.M. Feeling really good! Don't be afraid of Covid. Don't let it dominate your life. ... I feel better than I did 20 years ago!"

Conley said that because of Trump's unusual level of treatment so early after discovery of his illness he was in "uncharted territory." Conley was also upbeat at an afternoon briefing and said the president could resume his normal schedule once "there is no evidence of live virus still present." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, those with mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19 can be contagious for as many — and should isolate for at least — 10 days.

The CDC on Monday also acknowledged that people can sometimes be infected with the coronavirus through airborne transmission, especially in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation.

White House officials said Trump was anxious to be released after three nights at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where doctors revealed on Sunday that his blood oxygen level had dropped suddenly twice in recent days and that they gave him a steroid typically only recommended for the very sick. Trump was to leave the hospital after receiving a fourth dose of the antiviral drug remdesivir Monday evening, Conley said. He will receive the fifth and final dose Tuesday at the White House.

Trump's expected discharge raised new questions about how the administration was going to protect other officials from a disease that remains rampant in the president's body, and came as the scale of the outbreak at the White House itself is still being uncovered.

Multiple people, includ-

ing Bill Stepien, Trump's campaign manager, and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Kellyanne Conway, who were at Trump's nomination ceremony at the White House for judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, are among those who have attended events or traveled with the president over the last several days to have contracted the virus. Press secretary Kayleigh McEnany announced she had tested positive for the virus Monday morning and was entering quarantine.

Conley repeatedly declined to share results of medical scans of Trump's lungs, saying he was not at liberty to discuss the information because Trump did not waive doctor-patient confidentiality on the subject. COVID-19 has been known to cause significant damage to the lungs of some patients. Conley also declined to share the date of Trump's most recent negative test for the virus — a critical data point

for contact tracing and understanding where Trump was in the course of the disease.

Trump's nonchalant message about not fearing the virus comes as his own administration has encouraged Americans to be very careful and take precautions to avoid contracting and spreading the disease as cases continue to spike across the country. For more than eight months, Trump's efforts to play down the threat of the virus in hopes of propping up the economy ahead of the election have drawn bipartisan criticism.

Less than one month before Election Day, Trump was eager to project strength despite his illness.

In a short video released by the White House on Sunday, Trump insisted he understood the gravity of the moment. But his actions moments later, by leaving the hospital and sitting inside the SUV with others, suggested otherwise.

Only a day earlier, Trump

suggested he had finally grasped the true nature of the virus, saying in a video, "I get it."

On Sunday afternoon, Trump briefly ventured out of the hospital while contagious to salute cheering supporters by motorcade — an outing that disregarded precautions meant to contain the virus. Secret Service agents

inside the vehicle could be seen in masks and other protective gear.

Trump's doctors side-stepped questions on Sunday about exactly when his blood oxygen dropped — episodes they neglected to mention in multiple statements the day before — or whether lung scans showed any damage.

The disclosures about

Trump's oxygen levels and steroid treatment suggested the president is enduring more than a mild case of COVID-19.

Trump's treatment with the steroid dexamethasone is in addition to the single dose he was given Friday of an experimental drug from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. that supplies antibodies to help the immune system fight the virus. Trump on Friday also began a five-day course of remdesivir, a Gilead Sciences drug currently used for moderately and severely ill patients. The drugs work in different ways — the antibodies help the immune system rid the body of virus, and remdesivir curbs the virus' ability to multiply.

The steroid's use has only been proven to help in more serious cases. Among the concerns with earlier use is that steroids tamp down certain immune cells, hindering the body's own ability to fight off infection.

Trump is 74 years old and clinically obese, putting him at higher risk of serious complications.

First lady Melania Trump has remained at the White House as she recovers from her own bout with the virus.

Many in the White House are also shaken and scared — nervous that they have been exposed to the virus and confronting the reality that what seemed like a bubble of safety has become a COVID-19 hot spot. It took until late Sunday for the White House to send a generic note to staffers suggesting they not come to the building if they do not feel well.

Associated Press writers Lauran Neergaard, Jonathan Lemire, Aamer Madhani, Bill Barrow and Marilyn Marchione contributed to this report.

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President Donald Trump





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