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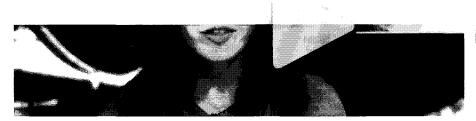
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April 18, 2020 at 12:06 am Filed Under: Coronavirus, COVID-19, Novel Coronavirus, Santa Clara County, Stanford University By Maria Medina



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STANFORD (KPIX) — Stanford University researchers on Friday announced startling new results from a study which indicates Santa Clara County residents may have been infected 50 to 85 times more than the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in early April.

The study, led by Stanford Health Policy Dr. Eran Bendavid, estimated that between 48,000 to 81,000 people in the county had likely been been sick with the virus. The study also revealed that not as many people may have immunity to the virus as some experts projected.

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According to the study, an estimated 2.5% to 4.2% of residents carry the antibodies and may be immune to COVID-19 — at least for some period of time. Research is still being conducted to determine whether carrying antibodies gives a person lifetime or temporary immunity or any at all.

"I think we all knew there was a lot of infection going on that wasn't being captured by testing," said UC Berkeley professor of epidemiology Dr. Arthur Reingold. "I always thought the suggestion that 40% to 50% of the population would have antibodies and be immune was not likely to be true."

Nearly a month ago, Gov. Newsom said that he believed 56% of the population would be infected with the virus over an eight-week period. We are now at the halfway mark of that prediction.

Dr. Reingold credits researchers for the study but also warns that the study needs to be carefully evaluated in terms of who was sampled and whether they accurately represented the county. He also points out that the numbers should not be applied to other regions.

Stanford researchers said they took blood samples from 3,300 volunteers recruited them from social media from all over Santa Clara County. They were recently tested over the course of two days at three different test sites.

Researchers said that, while many who took the test were in fact concerned they had the the virus, it turned out that many of them did not carry the antibodies.

The study also showed that the death rate may be lower than once projected - .12 to 0.2% compared to the state's projection of 3%. Researchers said they hope to use the study to project death and hospitalization rates as the pandemic continues.

Stanford's research comes as state leaders begin to discuss the next phase of the stay-at-home orders and restarting the economy.

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Dr. Reingold said that, as restrictions are lifted, we must be prepared for more testing, contact tracing and protecting the elderly and other vulnerable populations.

"We've got a lot of people left in the community who are at risk of getting infected," Dr. Reingold said. "When we lift restrictions and try to get people back to work, the virus is almost certainly going to be around."

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