

Donald Trump declares himself ready for rallies



Donald Trump Credit: AP/Press Association Images

Donald Trump insisted on Thursday he was ready to resume campaign rallies and felt “perfect” only one week after his Covid-19 diagnosis, as his doctor said the president had “completed his course of therapy” for the disease.

Mr. Trump has not been seen in public — other than in White House-produced videos — since his Monday return from the military hospital where he received experimental treatments for the virus.

On Thursday, his physician, Navy Commander Sean Conley, said in a memo Mr. Trump would be able to safely “return to public engagements” on Saturday, as the president tries to shift his focus to the election that is less than four weeks away, with millions of Americans already casting ballots.

While Mr. Trump said he believed he was no longer contagious, concerns about infection appeared to scuttle plans for next week’s presidential debate.

"I'm feeling good. Really good. I think perfect," Mr. Trump said during a telephone interview with Fox Business on Thursday, his first since he was released from a three-day hospital stay on Monday.

I think I'm better to the point where I'd love to do a rally tonight

Donald Trump

"I think I'm better to the point where I'd love to do a rally tonight.

"I don't think I'm contagious at all."

In a Fox News interview on Thursday night, Mr. Trump said he wanted to hold a rally in Florida on Saturday "if we have enough time to put it together".

He said he might also hold a rally the following night in Pennsylvania. "I feel so good," he told Fox's Sean Hannity.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says individuals can discontinue isolation 10 days after the onset of symptoms, which for Mr. Trump was October 1, according to his doctors.

Dr Conley said that meant Mr. Trump, who has been surrounded by minimal staffing as he works out of the White House residence and the Oval Office, could return to holding events on Saturday.

He added the president was showing no evidence of his illness progressing or adverse reactions to the aggressive course of therapy prescribed by his doctors.



Dr Sean Conley says Donald Trump has finished his course of treatment
Credit: Evan Vucci/AP

Earlier this week, Mr. Trump's doctors suggested they would work closely with military medical research facilities and other laboratories on "advanced diagnostic testing" to determine when the president was no longer contagious, but did not elaborate.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said two negative PCR lab tests 24 hours apart are a key factor in determining whether someone is still contagious.

"So, if the president goes 10 days without symptoms, and they do the tests that we were talking about, then you could make the assumption, based on good science, that he is not infected," Dr Fauci said on Thursday on MSNBC.

While reports of reinfection are rare, the CDC recommends that even people who recover from Covid-19 continue to wear a mask, stay distanced and follow other precautions. It was unclear if Mr. Trump, who eschewed mask-wearing in most settings, would abide by that guidance.

The White House, meanwhile, continued to decline to share when Mr. Trump last tested negative for the virus — which would help pinpoint when he was infected. Strategic communications director Alyssa Farah said that information was Mr. Trump’s “private medical history”.



Aides to Donald Trump continue to refuse to reveal important information about the president’s COVID infection Credit: Evan Vucci/AP

Mr. Trump’s campaign and the White House were already drawing up plans for the president to resume campaigning, eyeing a visit to Pennsylvania on Monday and Michigan on Tuesday ahead of what was to have been next Thursday’s debate.

But the Commission on Presidential Debates announced that event would be held “virtually” in order to “protect the health and safety of all involved.” Trump swiftly rejected that offer, and his campaign later called on the commission to delay the final two debates by a week to alleviate concerns about an in-person contest.

Over the objections of some aides, Mr. Trump returned to the Oval Office on

Thursday, even though a workspace had been set up in the residential section of the White House. Aides were discussing a potential photo opportunity with the president at the White House either Thursday or Friday but plans had not been finalized, according to two White House officials not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations.

Only a few senior aides, medical staff and security personnel have laid eyes on the president since he returned to the White House on Monday afternoon.

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