

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Wisconsin Rapids, WI -- Officials from the Wood County Health Department, along with local health care systems, schools, emergency medical services, and other partners, have been in contact to prepare for continued response to the growing COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization formally declared the coronavirus a pandemic Wednesday. On Thursday, March 12, 2020, Gov. Evers declared a public health emergency in the state of Wisconsin.

A new strain of coronavirus causes the disease COVID-19. Symptoms include cough, fever, and shortness of breath. In severe cases, pneumonia can develop. Those most at risk include the elderly, pregnant women, people with heart or lung disease, as well as anyone at greater risk of infection. For most, the virus is mild, presenting as a common cold.

Anyone who thinks they may have COVID-19 or has flu-like symptoms should **call the clinic or hospital before going** in for a diagnosis. Please **do not call 9-1-1**; this should be reserved for those needing critical emergency attention.

Currently there are pending tests, but no positive cases in Wood County. Wisconsin continues to see a rise in cases. There are a total of 1,629 cases in the United States, with 41 deaths. Wisconsin has not had any deaths. Washington, California and New York have sustained community transmission at this time.

Sue Kunferman, Wood County Health Officer, said parents should prepare for possible school closures. Additionally, many businesses are staying up to date on the situation and may be allowing employees to work from home as possible.

Community spread of the virus is likely. Please check Wood County Health Department's [social media](#) and [website](#) for updates on recommendations. Health officials acknowledge that recommendations on how to prevent the spread of the illness may change.

People should be prepared for the possibility of further spread of COVID-19 in the community. State and local public health officials will consider community interventions such as social distancing;

replacing in-person meetings with telework when possible; modifying, postponing, or canceling mass gatherings; implementing restrictions on visitors to residential treatment and living facilities; and closures of schools and childcare settings. Workplaces are encouraged to review sick leave policies.

The Department of Health Services website offers guidance for schools and universities, employers, community events/mass gatherings, and healthcare providers ([DHS website](#)). The Wood County Health Department supports the Department of Health's recommendation of cancelling or postponing non-essential gatherings of more than 250 people. Although it is not mandatory at this time, it is highly recommended.

If you are considering international travel check the [CDC website](#) for countries with travel restrictions. For domestic travel, consider not traveling to places with community transmission. The CDC website maintains an up-to-date listing of states with community transmission. It is required that individuals traveling to areas with community spread self-quarantine and monitor for 14 days after visiting these places. Non-essential travel is not recommended.

Currently a vaccine or drug is not available for COVID-19. The focus is on containment and minimizing exposure. Individuals should practice everyday prevention measures like:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Carry and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hand washing is not an option.
- Do not touch your face (eyes, mouth, nose).
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Do not share eating utensils, water bottles, beverage containers or other personal items.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact (6 feet or less) with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. If you develop a cough, fever, or shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms after traveling, stay home and contact your healthcare provider for instructions before going to a clinic.

Wood County Public Health recommends anyone over 60-years-old, those with preexisting conditions, and pregnant women avoid crowds and non-essential travel.

More information can be found on the Department of Health's website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm>

For additional questions, call the Wood County Health Department at 715-421-8911.