



Eastern Idaho Public Health

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) Providing Information to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

(SE Idaho) – Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) would like to address the evolving novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and provide information on best practices to keep you and your loved ones safe as well as share information on what our community can do to prepare. The current outbreak of this new respiratory disease called COVID-19, began in China in December of 2019. Since then, the illness has spread across the world, including the United States. The first COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. were reported on February 29 in Washington State with additional deaths occurring since then. In addition, other states are reporting confirmed cases of the disease indicating community-wide transmission is occurring.

At this time, there are no known COVID-19 cases in Idaho and the risk of transmission within the general public remains low. However, this situation could change at any moment. The goal of our public health response is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the United States. EIPH is working vigorously and proactively, in conjunction with many partners, to achieve this.

It is important to note that currently there are limited testing resources nationally and in Idaho for COVID-19. Individuals that meet specific criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Idaho's Bureau of Communicable Disease Prevention can be tested. Current testing criteria include individuals who:

- Have a fever of 100.4F or greater, AND
- Have symptoms of lower respiratory illness (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing), AND
- Have traveled to an affected area within the prior 14 days OR had close contact with a lab-confirmed COVID-19 patient within the prior 14 days.
- Testing is also available for individuals with acute lower respiratory illness requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis.

These criteria will likely be updated as more is known about COVID-19 and its spread, and as more testing resources become available. The most current information on testing criteria is available through the CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>.

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

While the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among the general public in Idaho remains low at this time, there are still precautions people can take to minimize their risk of contracting any respiratory illness. Additionally, most people who contract COVID-19 recover with the use of normal self-care; however, individuals with underlying health conditions are at risk for more severe illness and complications from the disease. Here are some things you can do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay informed – the CDC is updating its website daily with the latest information and advice for the public (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/>).

—MORE—

EIPH has activated a call center to help answer questions regarding coronavirus. Call 208-522-0310 or toll free at 855-533-3160 to speak with someone. The call center will be open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. People are also welcome to message us on Facebook after hours with general questions. Information is also updated on our website at www.EIPH.Idaho.gov.

- It is recommended at this time to avoid any nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea, Italy, and Japan.
- If you have recently returned from China, Japan, Iran, South Korea, or Italy and you feel sick with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, seek medical care. **BEFORE YOU GO TO A DOCTOR'S OFFICE, URGENT CARE, OR EMERGENCY ROOM, CALL AHEAD AND TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR RECENT TRAVEL AND YOUR SYMPTOMS.** The medical provider can suggest precautions to help reduce the spread of your illness to others at the facility.
- Wearing a mask is not being recommended unless you are currently ill.
- Since there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19 and no specific medications to treat the virus, it is important to remember to take everyday preventive actions that are always recommended to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These are non-pharmaceutical interventions, which include:
 - ✓ Staying home when you are sick except to seek medical care—**remember to call your provider ahead of time.**
 - ✓ Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
 - ✓ Avoiding touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.
 - ✓ Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your elbow.
 - ✓ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after contact with surfaces touched by others.
 - ✓ Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Preparing for the Spread of COVID-19

Individuals, families, businesses, schools, and others should have plans in place in the event of emergency, including a widespread disease outbreak. Visit the CDC's website for more information:

- **Families:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>
- **Businesses:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>
- **Childcare & K-12 Schools:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>
- **Higher Education:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities.html>
- **Community Events:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>

EIPH has links to interim guidance for these and other audiences on our website at www.EIPH.Idaho.gov.

Also, Governor Brad Little will be holding a news conference to discuss COVID-19 in Idaho on Wednesday, March 4 at 11:00 a.m. M.S.T. The press conference will be streamed on the Governor's Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/governorbradlittle/>.