



Washburn County Health Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2020
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COVID-19 Situation Report: June 15, 2020

As of Monday, June 15, the immediate COVID-19 outlook for Washburn County is **cautiously optimistic**. After the reopening of Wisconsin and the initial influx of summer tourists visiting the county, we have (so far) avoided an outbreak. The testing capacity has increased to assure that anybody who needs to be tested is able to be tested in Washburn County. Our local hospitals have enough masks and gloves for staff and our regional hospitals have the ability to provide ventilator support are not currently overwhelmed. **We must continue to practice social distancing and use of face masks**, but we can now consider relaxing a bit and enjoying the summer in our beautiful county.

MEASURES TO CONTINUE:

Practice social distancing by keeping six (6) feet between yourself and others. Physical distance between non-household contacts is a key tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Crowds become lower risk if attendees are able to physically distance themselves.

Considerations for social gatherings:

- *Limiting the size of gatherings is still advisable.* If a gathering sees 200 attendees in a space together, the risk of virus transmission increases greatly because social distancing is difficult to practice and the likelihood of participants disregarding mask recommendations or policies increases. If one individual in the crowd has COVID-19, the other 199 attendees will be in quarantine for 14 days from the date of the gathering.
- *If you do hold an event, register all attendees.* Be sure to compile a list of everybody in attendance, including any vendors or staff, along with contact information. One method to complete this would be requiring registration upon arrival. This will ensure that anyone who is exposed to COVID-19 at a gathering is informed of their risk of infection and given instructions on quarantine and symptom monitoring. This is key to stopping the spread of the virus.

Considerations for parents:

- *Take precautions while at the playground.* Parents should encourage their children to keep physical distance between themselves and other children while using playground equipment. Children should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after using playground equipment.
- *Consider alternative ways to participate in summer sports.* Parents and coaches should encourage physical distancing between children. Team sports, such as baseball, softball, and soccer, should consider having children sit with their parents in the stands (distanced from other families) instead of in the dugout or on the bench if there is not enough room for teammates to spread out.
- *It is up to the parents to decide how much risk you want to take.* Children appear to be at lower risk of serious complications from COVID-19, however globally we are seeing an alarming increase in reports of Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in children with COVID-19 which can cause permanent internal damage or death. Children also appear more likely to be asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 and can unknowingly spread the virus to high-risk family members, such as grandparents.

Wear a mask or face covering. Especially where physical distancing of six (6) feet is difficult, you should wear a mask or face covering when in public. Masks act as a physical barrier between the wearer's nose/mouth and the air to prevent infectious respiratory droplets from entering the air. Masks may not be enjoyable to wear, but using them helps to keep you from unknowingly infecting others. It is worth a little discomfort to keep the community healthy.

Get tested if you have any symptoms. No matter how mild the symptoms, if you have even one symptom you should get tested. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, sore throat, shortness of breath, cough, muscle aches, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and new loss of taste or smell. Testing is available in Washburn County to anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or anyone who has been exposed to an individual with COVID-19. Call your provider or find instructions on accessing testing on the Washburn County website: <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/news/public-health/Coronavirus-Outbreak>

Stay home if you have symptoms, test positive, or are told that you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Because this is a pandemic, we expect to see some cases regardless of precautions put in place. However, if people stay home when they are infectious or in their incubation period, we can keep the case count under control, prevent our local and regional health care systems from being overwhelmed, and avoid needing to lock everything down again.

Be aware of who your close contacts are. Many people have expanded their circle of close contacts to individuals beyond the household. If you are now gathering with your extended family, neighbors, or friends and are not wearing masks or social distancing, make sure you are able to tell the Health Department who those people are if you do get COVID-19. We will need to contact them to inform them of their exposure and provide instructions on quarantine and symptom monitoring. This is key to stopping the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 IS AN ONGOING GLOBAL PANDEMIC

We are not through this yet. Because this is a global pandemic, every one of us could get sick with COVID-19. It will continue to spread until we have all had it or until we have a vaccine to prevent it. There is still uncertainty around what previous infection means towards reinfection and/or lessening the severity of symptoms in reinfected individuals. Many areas that have relaxed prevention measures are seeing spikes in cases (including: Arizona, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, and a dozen other states). We can expect to see an increase in cases this fall with the start of influenza season because that is typically when we see all seasonal respiratory viruses increase. Co-infections have the potential to cause worse outcomes for individuals who contract COVID-19 and we could see more patients needing major medical interventions.

The Washburn County Health Department recognizes that this is a challenging time for everyone, full of uncertainties. These precautions are necessary because we do not have any other tools available to protect the public from COVID-19. Until a vaccine or treatment becomes available to prevent serious infections and death, the public must stay vigilant in its practices to prevent getting sick and to prevent unnecessary deaths. We will continue to monitor the situation, take any necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of our residents, and provide updates to the public.

Find current COVID-19 information and guidance at <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/news/public-health/Coronavirus-Outbreak>