



# Jefferson County Health Department

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[www.jeffersoncountywi.gov](http://www.jeffersoncountywi.gov)



Date: March 4, 2020

From: Gail M. Scott, RN, BSN, Director/Health Officer

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To: Jefferson County Businesses

With the emergence and complexity of COVID-19, the Jefferson County Health Department wanted to provide additional guidance to the businesses within our county. Right now there is no imminent risk of a COVID-19 outbreak, and we are still seeing a higher risk associated with influenza. However, the most important thing we can do is be prepared in case there was an outbreak. We aim to prevent the spread of illness among the public by offering educational resources, communicable disease surveillance, and investigation when needed. Our nurses and management are staying well-informed on COVID-19 developments. To provide additional reassurance, the Health Department has had previous experience in regular follow up on other reportable communicable diseases on a day-to-day basis, and even emergency preparedness measures such as mass clinics and response to outbreaks.

Although currently the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low, the best way you can prepare if there is a COVID-19 outbreak and safeguard the health of your workers, customers, and the community, is by ensuring open lines of communication and developing a pandemic plan for your business if you have not yet done so.

## **Pandemic Planning**

At this time, there has not been a declared pandemic for COVID-19 and there are no confirmed or suspect cases in Jefferson County. What is being encouraged is planning in case there was an outbreak for COVID-19 in your community. All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. We understand that for some, these conversations can be alarming, but preparing and being proactive is crucial. Please note: your local and state health departments would be conducting thorough follow up if we did see any COVID-19 cases in the local community and we would communicate any confirmed or suspect case (without disclosing identifying information for the person's privacy) to the general public via press releases, our county website, and our health department social media. If your business or one of your employees was found to be at risk for COVID-19, your local health department would be in contact with you for further guidance.

A. Emergency planning for a pandemic should not equal alarm. Emergency planning is an important way for your business to feel more prepared and confident of your roles and capacity IF there was ever a need for response. It all starts with having the conversation with your key players. This type of planning can often benefit other types of issues, not only due to illness (e.g. natural environmental disasters). If you do an online search, you will likely find many types of “pandemic plans” for influenza, and maybe some in process for COVID-19. The Jefferson County Health Department encourages checking the CDC and DHS websites for the most relevant and evidence-based templates. Guidance documents are below:

- [Get Your Workplace Ready for Pandemic Flu 2017](#)
- [U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Plan 2017 UPDATE](#)

B. When resources mention having masks on hand, please remember that not all masks are the same. Certain types of masks need to be specially fitted by trained professionals (via a process called “fit testing”) in order to be effective in preventing exposure to illness. Other types of masks are not fitted and are most recommended for people with respiratory illnesses to help prevent the spread of contagious droplets when they are coughing or sneezing.

- At this time, CDC recommendations state that the use of face masks on healthy people in the general population does not help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Masks need to be primarily reserved for those who need them most: health care workers in hospitals and clinics who are in close proximity with sick patients, and for sick patients to wear to help prevent the spread of illness.
- The Jefferson County Health Department is not recommending that you stockpile large quantities of any type of masks at this time, but instead only have a few of the non-fitted type on hand. The Jefferson County Health Department is also not requiring or recommending mask fit testing for anyone at this time.
- If any change in guidance comes from the CDC or DHS regarding masks for general population use, we will be sure to let you know.

### **What you can do now to prevent the spread of illness**

A. Handwashing is important! Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water

if hands are visibly dirty. Provide posters or signs in the restroom to remind all to wash their hands properly.

- B. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- C. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- D. **Stay home when you are sick. For influenza, the Health Department recommends staying home until you are symptom-free for 24 hours.**
- E. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- F. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

#### **Other important resources that may be helpful**

- A. [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses](#)
- B. DHS COVID-19 website: contains fact sheets in several languages, prevention tips and guidance for employers: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm>
- C. Sharing a poster in bathrooms, hallways and communal areas to remind staff of the importance of protecting against respiratory illnesses:  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02591.pdf> (poster)  
  
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html>
- D. Jefferson County Health Department:  
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Please contact us with any questions. Thank you for all that you do for our county's residents!