



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Panhandle Health District

**Panhandle Health District**

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*



**Kootenai Health**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Panhandle Health District (PHD) and Kootenai Health Provide Best Practices to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19**

**North Idaho** – Panhandle Health District (PHD) and Kootenai Health 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. The current outbreak of 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19, formerly 2019-nCoV) was first identified in China in 2019 and has now spread internationally, impacting an increasing number of countries, including the United States.

While there are no cases in Idaho at this time, PHD and Kootenai Health are staying aware of the current situation with COVID-19 and are proactively taking steps to ensure the safety of our communities through preparedness. The goal of our public health response is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the United States. We are 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. Only individuals that meet specific criteria established by the CDC and Idaho State Lab are being tested. Tests are currently being limited to individuals who:

- Have a fever of 100.4F or greater
- Have symptoms of lower respiratory illness (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- 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.

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 will be available through the Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>.

PHD has activated a call center to help answer questions regarding coronavirus. Call 877-415-5225 to speak with someone. The call center will be open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Kootenai Health has a comprehensive Highly Infectious Disease Plan that outlines best practices and protocols to follow when a patient is suspected to have a highly infectious disease. Whether it be measles, COVID-19 or tuberculosis, Kootenai Health is prepared to

triage, assess and care for patients while protecting health care workers. Kootenai Health follows the CDC's recommendations for preventing the spread of all viral illnesses, which is avoiding close contact with people who are sick, covering cough and sneeze, avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth and washing hands frequently.

At this time, Kootenai Health is not experiencing any supply shortages. They are aware of the possibility and are working with vendors regularly to discuss options if issues arise. While COVID-19 is a new (or novel) coronavirus, disease outbreaks like this are not new territory in public health. PHD is monitoring the national and international situations very closely and we have response plans and relationships in place within our jurisdiction to respond to these types of public health events.

The risk of transmission within the general public remains low and there are precautions people can take to minimize their risk of contracting any respiratory illness. Additionally, most people who contract Coronavirus recover with the use of normal self-care. It is important to utilize the same good illness etiquette used to protect ourselves from the common cold or flu.

- Stay informed – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updating its website daily with the latest information and advice for the public ([www.cdc.gov/ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/ncov)).

- It is recommended at this time to avoid any nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea, Northern 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 or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.** Members of the community are encouraged to call PHD's call center with questions regarding coronavirus. Call 877-415-5225 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- Since there is currently no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for this virus, it is important to remember to take every day preventive actions that are always recommended to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.

- » Avoid people who are sick and if you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible.
- » Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- » Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- » Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.
- » Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol.
- » Make sure you are up-to-date on all recommended vaccinations.

For more in-depth information about COVID-19, please go to the following websites:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novelcoronavirus-2019>

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