



Panhandle Health District

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community

Don't forget your neighbor

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This is the second of a series about COVID-19 preparation and regional updates. Check the Press daily for new information, tips, and ways our health care professionals are working to keep our community safe.

As I speak with people around our community, I know many are concerned about their well-being and that of family and friends and how the coronavirus may affect our community. Currently there is one confirmed case of COVID-19 in the state of Idaho. We are aware that this situation is rapidly changing, and that community transmission could occur. This can further fears, rumors, and misinformation.

You may be wondering what you should do and when. While this is a global pandemic, disease outbreaks are not new territory in public health, and Panhandle Health District (PHD) has response plans and relationships in place within our jurisdiction to respond accordingly. A big part of that is working with community partners – from county emergency managers, to area hospitals, schools, law enforcement, first responders, local and state public health are year-round relationships and planning for potential outbreaks are critical in times like this, where an outbreak can rapidly change direction.

Our internal response team is in constant contact and is meeting daily to further discuss any developments and coordinate. Additionally, team members from our epidemiology, preparedness and communications teams are meeting with their counterparts in Idaho's other public health districts and state public health.

During this time, there are those in our community who are high risk. That includes those 60 years and older and those of any age with an underlying health condition, like diabetes, heart, disease, lung disease, or a compromised immune system. Those are the people we need to protect the most. This is the main reason we released our guidance on mass gatherings and public events, to protect those most vulnerable.

Although I work in public health, my family is a part of this community just like you. My children attend childcare and my husband teaches at a local school. I'm currently writing this while making pancakes and making sure the kids aren't getting into something they shouldn't. One can dream, right?

Here is what we are doing as a family in preparation:

1. We've been extra aware of washing our hands often and wiping down surfaces that are touched frequently.
2. Avoiding handshakes. I've been bumping elbows instead.
3. We filled our medication prescriptions on schedule and gave the folks at the pharmacy smiles and thanks for all their hard work.
4. We're speaking to our kids (mainly our older child) about COVID-19 in a manner that lessens fears because we realize that when they are watching the news with us it can seem like a very frightening time.
5. We're checking in with grandma and grandpa.
6. We're checking reliable and accurate sources for our information.

Often the sentiment in North Idaho is that we take care of ourselves, even when we aren't in a pandemic. Maybe you've been stocking up on hand sanitizer, soap, and paper towels. Maybe you've witnessed fears manifesting into panic and then rudeness.

Just a simple reminder to be kind. We are still a community and we are stronger when we work together. When this is over, will we be proud of how we behaved during the craziness? Give the cashier at the store a smile and a thank you. Ask your co-worker how they're doing. Check in with your neighbor.

Maybe even offer a roll of that precious toilet paper.

Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.

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