



Panhandle Health District

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2020

Contact: Katherine Hoyer
208-415-5108

We All Play a Part in Protecting Our Community

What you can do

By Lora Whalen
Panhandle Health District

We've sent out guidance. Our mayors have provided orders. We continue to spread the message of best practices in order to slow the spread of this virus. And yet, we still see businesses and community members being in close contact, not practicing social distancing, or allowing sick employees to continue working.

Everyone needs to play a part in slowing the spread of this virus. There are things each of us can do called Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPI's). You will be hearing more about NPI's as we progress through the pandemic. Below are a few NPI's that you can implement immediately to help.

1. Have **one** family member do the shopping. Especially if anyone in your household is elderly or has an underlying medical condition, this should no longer be a family event.
2. Practice social distancing while out in public. Stay 6 feet apart. This includes standing in grocery lines.
3. Wash your hands more frequently than you have ever done before. Use soap and water and wash for at least 20 seconds. That's the Happy Birthday song twice or the ABCs.
4. Sick employees need to stay home. If an employee is out sick, don't call them in to cover a shift.
5. Limit meetings to 10 people or less and keep 6 feet between everyone. If you cannot do this, postpone the meeting or look at virtual options.
6. **Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions** are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this high-risk group, we urge you to avoid crowds and limit your public outings.
7. Avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits.
8. Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.

9. If you have a positive COVID-19 test, you and your entire family will be asked to self-isolate at home. While awaiting test results, stay home!
10. Call ahead! If you are experiencing symptoms of any respiratory/fever illness call your doctor or Panhandle Health District, do not come in.

We all must fight against rumors and false information regarding COVID-19 in our community. Please use trusted sources. Respect the privacy of an individual who has COVID-19. These are our neighbors, our loved ones, and our community members. Support them in their time of need.

Grocery stores will remain open throughout this pandemic. That is why the hoarding and panic buying are unnecessary and put our most vulnerable populations at greater risk. Many grocery stores have set aside specific hours for senior citizens and those with compromised immune systems. Call your grocery store to find out when these hours are set aside.

Slowing the progression of the virus with social distancing will help ensure the health care system does not get overwhelmed. Viruses are opportunistic -- they don't know borders, they don't care where you live, or what your gender or race or ethnic heritage is. They just want a good host. A negative test today for the novel coronavirus is no guarantee -- you could be exposed tomorrow, or the next day. That's why we need to continue best practices.

We urge everyone to do their part to stop the spread of this virus!

Our call center is available to answer questions Monday – Friday 8am – 7pm and Saturdays from 9am – 1pm. Dial 1-877-415-5225.

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.

###