

Coronavirus - COVID-19

A LOCAL ASSESSMENT from Bayfield County Health Department

As of March 2, 2020

Coronavirus is something that has circulated in Wisconsin for quite some time – this family of virus is very common. The COVID-19 is a new strain, which makes it unique in that humans have not encountered this before.

- Coronavirus is typically *very similar to the common cold*. Those who have healthy immune systems are more likely to have mild symptoms.
- Some persons do have more serious cases (ex. may develop pneumonia). If a person has COVID-19, they would either be isolated at home (using a separate bedroom and bathroom from their family members) and use social distancing; or if they require hospitalization, they would be in a separate room from other patients.
- Most cases who have coronavirus and stay at home have avoided spread to family members.
- Travelers from China and other at-risk countries are being monitored at the local level.
- Each county health department is very closely watching the situation and is heavily involved in planning – similar to how we planned and prepared in case of Ebola.
- There are **no cases** of COVID-19 in Ashland or Bayfield County. (As of March 2nd)
- Rumors about COVID-19 in Ashland County are false – this is a perfect example of how local gossip/rumors can spread like wildfire.
- The one confirmed case in the state of Wisconsin is almost ready to be taken out of isolation, and apparently is doing fine recovering at home. (They did not require any hospitalization.)

One thing that needs to be considered is that face masks **are not necessary at this time** for general interactions with the public. If someone is sick and has a cough – that person should be recommended to stay at home until well. If an employee is sick – we should be encouraging them to stay home. This would be the recommendation whether it is influenza or coronavirus.

Inappropriate use of N95 respirator masks puts our community at risk of a shortage. So – if we do not have coronavirus in our community, we should not be wearing these types of masks. We need conserve these for emergency responders and hospitals/health care professionals.

In general, hand hygiene is the #1 most effective way of preventing illness. This includes coronavirus. Making sure that employees are washing their hands frequently and that soap dispensers are well-stocked are important, especially during the height of flu season and in light of potential spread of COVID-19. Social distancing is important for any respiratory illness involving a cough. Proper cough etiquette is also another way to help prevent the spread of illness. Let me know if you have questions on any of this.

Special wipes are available that help kill viruses and germs. If the wipe container specifies that it kills SARS, it should cover COVID-19. (*Note: Lysol wipes have shown to be effective against viruses similar to the novel coronavirus.*) I would recommend **wiping surfaces at least once per day** (ex. countertops, doorknobs, bathroom handles) just as a precaution against any illness and in light of the fact that we have a norovirus (stomach flu) and flu (respiratory) circulating currently in Bayfield County.

The Health Dept. continues to get daily updates from Wisconsin DHS and the CDC. If any information changes on the recommendations, we will be certain to send an update.

For your information, the following websites are reputable sites for learning more about COVID-19:

Wisconsin DHS Coronavirus Page: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/coronavirus.htm>

COVID-19 WI DHS Page: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

COVID-19 CDC Page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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