



## PRESS RELEASE

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# COVID-19: From DCHS and Your Local Health Department

Dear Community Member,

As the Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak evolves, hospitals and health systems know our patients and communities are increasingly concerned whether and how the virus is spreading in communities. That's why we are working closely with our federal, state and local partners to respond to this challenge, update contingency plans and stay informed with the most up-to-date information.

Our plan at Dickinson County Healthcare System (DCH) is to support the community by ensuring that our staff are trained, equipped and capable of the practices needed to help prevent the spread of diseases like COVID-19 and care for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. It is important to know that DCH regularly prepares for the unexpected and is required to conduct recurring preparedness drills.

DCH Chairman of Infectious Disease Control, W.B. Carlson Jr. MD commented, "The most common question we are hearing is, what should I do if I'm symptomatic (cough, fever, difficulty breathing) and suspect I may have been exposed to COVID-19? The answer is you should contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing and have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with existing cases of COVID-19. Your healthcare provider will work with the local health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. They will also provide you with guidance for how to manage your visit to their office and what precautions you should take to avoid infecting others. The office may advise you to wear a surgical mask if you have one; wait in your vehicle/outside to be transported into the facility away from other patients; and possibly recommend other precautionary measures."

To help proactively fight the spread of COVID-19, the DCH staff is:

- Educating staff and the community on proper precautions regarding COVID-19 and all viruses;
- Isolating those who may have the virus in airborne isolation rooms per CDC protocol, where they will be assessed by trained personnel;
- Informing the local public health officials when a possible COVID-19 patient presents to DCH so that these patients can quickly be tested for the virus and our local public health officials can start to identify other potentially affected individuals who have been in close contact;
- Closely communicating with public health officials and our neighboring healthcare facilities to ensure all caregivers are as prepared as possible.

The Dickinson – Iron District Health Department reminds us the most important thing our community members can do to prevent illness is to practice good hygiene. Here are some recommended good hygiene practices:

- Frequently and properly wash your hands (at least 20 seconds of scrubbing with warm water, including in between and the tips of your fingers and near your wrists);
- If you cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow or a tissue – not into your hands;
- Stay home if you have cold or flu symptoms; and frequently disinfect high-traffic surfaces in your home or work (such as door knobs, light switches, remote controls, faucets, cell phones, and common area surfaces). If soap and water are not readily available to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.

Additionally, both DCH and our local Health Department are paying close attention to the protection of healthcare workers caring for patients. They are the most valuable resource when it comes to treating and stopping the spread of this or any infection. As such, we want to make sure they have the personal protective equipment, training and support they need to provide care to patients.

Those patients who do exhibit COVID-19 symptoms and wish to seek care are urged to first contact their physician's office or clinic for further instruction. Patients who need to be seen on an emergency basis should present to the emergency department and if possible, contact the hospital by phone at (906) 774-1313, so that we can appropriately manage your entrance and transport through the hospital. Please remember that despite the COVID-19 outbreak, DCH is your local hospital and is the safest place for you to seek care.

