

COVID 19: March 17th, 2020 UPDATE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WI DHS) and the North Shore Health Department (NSHD), along with other local health departments are responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel corona virus, COVID-19. For the most current information on the COVID-19, please visit the [CDC's website on COVID-19](#) or www.nshealthdept.org.

Cases in Wisconsin are on the rise: As of March 17th, 2020, Wisconsin has 72 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 24 being in Milwaukee County and a sizable number of these from communities in the North Shore area. To demonstrate how quickly this disease is moving through our community, Milwaukee County reported its first case on Friday, March 13th. In the last 24 hours, there is evidence of community spread in Milwaukee, Dane and Kenosha counties. This means that there are people who have tested positive, and it is unknown what their exposures have been. They have had no exposures to a known case and have not traveled to a location where there is community transmission.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services under the direction of Governor Evers has prohibited public gatherings of 10 or more people: This restricts restaurants and bars throughout the state from having any indoor seating. Take-out, including drive-thru services, and delivery services are still permitted. Social distancing should be practiced by maintaining six feet between customers during pick-up. The press release can be found [here](#). The emergency order can be found [here](#).

Social Distancing is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19: The idea behind social distancing is to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Essentially, social distancing means staying at home except for essential functions, such as work and going to the grocery store or pharmacy. When you are at these public places, maintain a distance of six feet between others. Even if you are not currently experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, it is recommended that individuals practice social distancing in order to protect themselves and others. It is also recommended to avoid social gatherings such as playdates and sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors in your home, and non-essential workers in your house.

The signs and symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to seasonal influenza or the flu: For most people, symptoms may include a dry cough, a fever, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

I'm experiencing symptoms—what should I do?

If symptoms are mild, like those of the cold or flu, you should stay home and avoid contact with others. Monitor your symptoms and take your temperature in the morning and the evening. Wash your hands with soap and water, avoid touching your face, and regularly disinfect surfaces you come into contact with such as countertops, tables, and sinks. If you think you need to be tested for COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider for further guidance on testing. Testing is being prioritized based on clinical criteria.

Testing is **not recommended** for patients with mild, upper respiratory symptoms, except in limited circumstances. If you think you have COVID-19, it is best to stay isolated for 14 days. This prevents the spread of the disease throughout the community.

There are steps to take to keep yourself and others healthy for both COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick. Keep children home from school if they are sick. Children should be free from fever without use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the sleeve of your shirt.
- Disinfect commonly used surfaces with a solution containing at least 70% alcohol, or an EPA-registered household disinfectant. You can also prepare a diluted bleach solution by mixing 5 tablespoons of bleach with one gallon of water. A list of EPA-registered household disinfectants can be found [here](#).

NSHD is providing local public health support through a variety of channels:

- **Surveillance:** We are monitoring cases through multiple websites including WI DHS, CDC and Johns Hopkins.
- **Investigations:** We will respond to notifications of positive and pending cases in the North Shore and initiate contact investigations with confirmed cases.
- **Containment:** NSHD uses federal and state guidelines to assess risk of exposure to COVID-19 and determine need for quarantine and monitoring.
- **Mitigation:** NSHD has been working with school districts to support their decisions to close for four weeks from March 16th until April 16th. NSHD supports the four-week closure to allow teachers time to prepare distance and virtual learning opportunities, encompass spring break and allow a 14-day, post spring break travel quarantine for staff and students who may have traveled to communities with COVID-19 spread. After 14 days individuals who have travelled over spring break will have passed the 14-day quarantine time frame. The four-week recommendation will be reassessed based on the impact of COVID-19 in our communities.
- **Communication:** For the most current information on the COVID-19, please visit the [CDC's website on COVID-19](#) or [WI DHS's website on COVID-19 website](#). NSHD has issued a press release and hosted a press conference on March 13th, 2020 when our initial case was announced. Any new case announcements will be made as part of Milwaukee County's daily press briefings.

NSHD is NOT currently providing testing for COVID-19: If your symptoms worsen, please contact your medical provider for guidance on the need for COVID-19 testing. They will determine if you need to be tested and if you need to come in for further care. If you decide to seek medical attention for your signs and symptoms, please call ahead and notify them you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and your prior travel and exposure history.

Additional information about COVID-19 is on our website at www.nshealthdept.org. If you are concerned about your risk of getting COVID-19 or have recently traveled to an affected area, please contact the North Shore Health Department at 414-371-2980.