

COVID 19: March 18th, 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 18th, 2020, Wisconsin has 106 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 47 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. There is now substantial 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.

Playgrounds throughout the North Shore area are now closed: Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the playgrounds throughout the North Shore are closed. Please refrain from using the playground equipment. This is to slow the spread of the virus and preserve the health of our community. Additionally, gatherings such as playdates, sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors in your home, and non-essential workers in your house should be avoided. Practicing social distancing is essential to slow the spread of the virus, as is washing your hands and disinfecting surfaces frequently. Thank you for your cooperation and your efforts to stop the spread.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) 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](#). Some spaces are exempt from this ban. See the list [here](#) along with answers to other FAQs.

The Wisconsin DHS released an order for restrictions on childcare facilities: Childcare facilities are being asked to limit their staff to 10 people at one time and allow a maximum of 50 children to be present at any given time. Click [here](#) for the full order.

NSHD is *NOT* currently providing testing for COVID-19: If you are experiencing severe symptoms or need medical assistance, contact your physician. They are in charge of deciding who should be tested and will base their decision off of new priority criteria released by the WI DHS on March 17th. Doctors have been directed to use a tiered system to decide who should be tested. Details on this can be found [here](#). Hospitalized patients are the priority for testing.

If you are experiencing mild upper respiratory symptoms, *testing is not recommended*. Assume you have disease, or another disease that is transmissible, and practice precautionary measures: self-quarantine and self-monitor for 14 days or until you are fever free for 72 hours. Receiving a negative test result does not mean you do not have the disease. If you were exposed within a few days of testing, you could still develop the disease even with a negative test result at an earlier date. Additionally, no treatment is available upon a positive result.

Staying home and following self-isolation and self-monitoring guidelines is the best course of action. Visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) [website](#) for more guidance.

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.

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.