



Ford County Public Health Department

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For Immediate Release

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update & Guidance to Minimize Risk & Spread of COVID-19

Ford County Public Health Department (FCPHD) continues to work with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor potential outbreaks, provide frequent updates of emerging information, and share where residents can obtain resources and tools to prepare their household and prevent possible spread of COVID-19.

Everyone has a role to play in getting ready and staying healthy. Individuals and communities should familiarize themselves with recommendations to protect themselves and their communities from getting and spreading respiratory illnesses like COVID-19. The best way for Ford County residents to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, still applies to prevent COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

How can people reduce the risk of getting sick and prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick, unless seeking medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops and phones.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing spread of COVID-19, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.

According to FCPHD Administrator, Lana Sample, “The risk to Ford County residents remains low but we want to continue taking steps that are in the best interest of Ford County residents’ health and safety. In doing so, we can continue to keep the risk low and slow the spread of COVID-19.”

The State of Illinois and FCPHD recommend the following at this time:

- **Businesses and employers** - Businesses that can have employees work remotely should consider doing so. For those who cannot, it is recommended employers actively encourage all employees to stay home when sick, perform hand hygiene, and properly cover coughs and sneezes.
- **Schools** – The State and FCPHD do not recommend school be cancelled at this time. It is recommended however, to not hold large assemblies, including sports and other activities with spectators exceeding 250 people.
- **Community Events** – The State and FCPHD encourage that community events of 250 people or more be cancelled or postponed until May 1. This includes personal and social events. For events less than 250 people, organizers should closely consider who is likely to attend and, if it includes vulnerable populations, consider canceling.
- **Elections** – The election will proceed as scheduled on Tuesday, March 17. Organizers and attendees should promote and follow guidance on mitigation such as handwashing, cleaning, and disinfecting.

FCPHD travel recommendations

Cases of COVID-19 have been reported in many U.S. states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease. FCPHD recommends avoiding unnecessary travel at this time. Depending on your circumstances, you may choose to delay or cancel your plans. If you do decide to travel within the U.S., be sure to practice precautions to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases during travel. Depending on your travel history, you may be asked to stay home for a period of 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread.

For the most up to date information on COVID-19, visit the CDC’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) webpage. For additional information and resources, visit FCPHD’s website or follow FCPHD’s Facebook page.