



Notice from the Elkhart County Health Department

The Coronavirus, also referred to as COVID-19, has been in the news over the weekend. Unfortunately, there has been a report of a death in Washington State, with possible new community cases there under investigation. I would like to take this opportunity to share some facts with you, to help you prepare for the Coronavirus.

Please remember, *the risk of disease for Hoosiers remains quite low at this time!* And with preparation, we hope to keep everyone as healthy as possible!

The virus is a member of a large family of viruses, and is similar to the virus that caused SARS and MERS, and the common cold! The illness this virus causes is mild in over 80% of the people who contract it, but in elderly, or chronically ill persons it can lead to severe pneumonia, multi-organ failure, and death. Although first discovered in China, where over 80,000 contracted the disease and thousands have died, it has now spread to over 57 countries. We should expect to see some cases in Indiana eventually. That is why we are getting prepared now.

The virus is new; we are still learning about it. The CDC, and the Indiana State Department of Health are updating information frequently as conditions change concerning the spread of the COVID-19, and as we learn about the best ways to contain the virus and prevent disease. The Elkhart County Health Department, our area hospitals, emergency agencies, local government, schools, and businesses are working together to update epidemic and emergency plans, check supplies, and preparing so ensure the effect of a possible outbreak will be minimized as much as possible.

There is no vaccine or preventative medicines for COVID-19 at this time, and the key to staying healthy is prevention. But the most effective ways to prevent this viral illness are things that are already familiar to you, and the same ones we use to prevent influenza and other respiratory illness. 1.) Wash your hands frequently with soap and water! Wash them all over, for 20 seconds. This is indeed the best way to prevent germs from infecting you! If you have to use hand sanitizer, be sure it contains at least 60% alcohol, and rub your hands all over with the gel till it evaporates. 2.) Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze—use a tissue or cough into your elbow. 3.) Keep your hands away from your face—this will prevent germs you may have touched from getting into your upper respiratory tissues and causing disease. 4.) Stay home if you are sick—don't spread your illness to others.

And remember to keep yourself generally healthy—eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, getting plenty of sleep, and exercising regularly. A healthy body's immune system is better able to fight off any germs you might meet!

Using a facemask if you have no symptoms has not been shown to prevent disease, so no need to bother with that if you are healthy. Also, the virus has been reported to be susceptible to most household cleaners, so no special chemicals are needed to disinfect your house or work place.

For the latest updates on COVID-19 news, check out [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

February 29, 2020
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