

Good to Know

Senior Newsletter

April 2020

Coronavirus Response in Sheridan County

As most people know by now, there is a global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Here is what is happening in Sheridan County:

The County Commissioners, Public Health, Sheridan Memorial Hospital personnel, school administrations, Council on Aging, and others have had many meetings to discuss the best defense for our communities.

Sunday evening, Montana Governor Steve Bullock directed the closure of all public K-12 schools for two weeks, and strongly recommended that all gatherings of more than 50 people be canceled. This means that our upcoming Ag Expo in Plentywood, the Daniels County Day of Service in Scobey and other public events have been called off or postponed.

Our Senior Programs have had to adapt as well. Here are some details:

- Senior Centers are asked to close until further notice.
- The two county-operated Congregate Meal sites have been closed. In Plentywood, regular congregate diners are invited to request Home Delivered Meals by calling Vicki Ruby at 406.765.3412.
- Our contracted cafe sites in Dagmar, Medicine Lake and Westby have been asked to offer take-out senior meals - if they still choose to operate. Contact your local cafe site for details. Several counties are closing all restaurants and bars, so this may change in the near future.
- In Plentywood, Home Delivered Meals clients are being asked to set up a bench or box outside their door. Glenwood will knock or ring the doorbell when they bring meals and then leave the meal outside. They are concerned about protecting their individuals who deliver the meals.
- In Home Respite Care aides will screen every client for COVID19 at every visit. If the client is ill, the aide will wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, and refer clients to be seen by their health care providers.
- Overnight Respite and Adult Day Care will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the senior or their or someone in their household is diagnosed with COVID-19, we will probably not be able to accommodate them until everyone in their family is well.
- Homemaker services are on hiatus for now. We hope to be able to hire a new housekeeper sometime in the near future and continue this service once this crisis has passed.
- Quality Transit is following guidelines set out by the Montana Department of Transportation, which include extra cleaning procedures and seating riders as far apart as possible.

Take everyday precautions

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
- Consider not playing card games - everyone touches the cards and passes them around to each other.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
- Avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips, and especially avoid embarking on cruise ships.

If COVID-19 is spreading in your community

Practice social distancing and stay away from anyone who is sick

Take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people to further reduce your risk of being exposed to this new virus.

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks

If a COVID-19 outbreak happens in your community, it could last for a long time. (An outbreak is when a large number of people suddenly get sick.) Depending on how severe the outbreak is, public health officials may recommend community actions to reduce people's risk of being exposed to COVID-19. These actions can slow the spread and reduce the impact of disease.

Watch for symptoms / emergency warning signs

- Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
- If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. In adults, emergency warning signs*:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

What to do if you get sick

- Stay home and call your doctor.
- Call your healthcare provider and let them know about your symptoms. Tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help them take care of you and keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- If you are not sick enough to be hospitalized, you can recover at home.
- Know when to get emergency help.
- Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed above.

Medicare & Coronavirus

<https://www.medicare.gov/medicare-coronavirus>

Medicare covers the lab tests for COVID-19. You pay no out-of-pocket costs .

Medicare covers all medically necessary hospitalizations. This includes if you're diagnosed with COVID-19 and might otherwise have been discharged from the hospital after an inpatient stay, but instead you need to stay in the hospital under quarantine.

At this time, there's no vaccine for COVID-19. However, if one becomes available, it will be covered by all Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (Part D).

If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, you have access to these same benefits. Medicare allows these plans to waive cost-sharing for COVID-19 lab tests. Many plans offer additional telehealth benefits beyond the ones described below. Check with your plan about your coverage and costs.