



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Cole County
Health Department

Cole County COVID Update – November 12, 2020

Over the last eight months, everyone has learned a lot about contact tracing for COVID-19. At the Cole County Health Department (CCHD), we have learned that:

- it can take five to seven days before the local health department receives the positive results;
- not all lab results are received;
- not all lab results have the correct personal or contact information;
- many people avoid answering the phone or don't give complete information; and
- at this point, it's very difficult to determine exactly where someone was exposed.

As you know, cases of COVID-19 have been increasing nationwide. The state of Missouri and Cole County have also seen case numbers increasing and many city and county health departments have been struggling to keep up with the contact tracing. CCHD has been fortunate to have extra staff on hand funded by the CARES Act. Nearly every day, we have investigated each new positive case. However, cases continue to rise.

It is imperative to get past the barriers of traditional contact tracing. After exploring expedited contact tracing and community mitigation strategies, we have developed a new approach to contact tracing which will allow positive cases to immediately notify their contacts as soon as they receive positive lab results.

When our new strategy is implemented, patients will not have to wait for instructions or information. They will be able to take appropriate actions immediately without waiting for CCHD. At the time of testing, patients will be instructed as to what to do while they wait and when results arrive.

We have many people call and say they tested positive and need to know what to do. Now they will receive instructions at the time of testing and won't need to wait for a call from CCHD. They will know exactly what to do.

The positive case will be expected to notify their contacts. This will eliminate the wait time and hopefully, stop people from unknowingly spreading the virus. We are also hoping that people will feel more comfortable telling their contacts about their positive result versus a stranger on the phone.

As many other health departments are doing, CCHD will continue to assist those places where outbreaks are more likely to occur, such as: businesses and schools. As long as CARES ACT

funding is available, we will continue to provide contact tracing services to the schools as needed.

Educational information will be provided on the CCHD website and we will be available for consultation as well. Additionally, CCHD will be working with the local hospitals on an increased educational campaign

All of this new guidance in addition to guidance from CDC about when to quarantine, will be on our website, colehealth.org. Starting next week, the number of new cases per day will still be shown on CCHD's website but the number of active cases will not be specified.

Beginning tomorrow, Friday November 13th, if you are tested at any site in Cole County, you will be given a lime green educational handout. If you get a call from your doctor with a positive result, you need to take immediate action to slow the spread of the virus within your friends, family and coworkers by following the outlined steps on the lime green educational handout. Please do not wait for a phone call from the health department.

Also, keep in mind that you will need to notify everyone with whom you have had close contact. A close contact is anyone that you were within 6 feet of for more than 15 minutes starting 48 hours prior to becoming symptomatic, regardless of cloth face coverings. If you had to do that today, how many people would that be?

Please take action now to reduce that number on a daily basis. Keeping your distance from those outside of your household is important in limiting the spread of COVID-19.

As previously shared, the Cole County Health Department has observed clusters of positive cases at office buildings, correctional facilities, and long term care facilities. We have also seen clusters related to school, school activities, gatherings and household exposure to a known case. We are seeing increased interaction at social gatherings where physical distancing is not easily maintained.

We are urging everyone to continue to take responsibility for their own health and to protect others. Please reconsider hosting or attending gatherings that bring together people that are outside of your normal interactions, especially if physical distancing cannot be maintained. These activities are high risk for transmission of the virus. Please adhere to physical distancing recommendations and limit contact with others outside of your household.

In addition to limiting social interactions, the Cole County Health Department is still strongly recommending that everyone take precautionary measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Adhere to all social distancing recommendations and do not be within six (6) feet of others outside of your household for more than fifteen (15) minutes.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating. If not available, use hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

- It is recommended that face coverings be worn when in contact with someone outside of your household within six (6) feet for more than 15 minutes. Cloth face coverings offer some degree of protection against large infectious droplets, such as mucus or saliva, when speaking, sneezing, or coughing. This particularly protects those around the person wearing the face covering. It also helps those who are unknowingly infectious from spreading it to others.

Cloth face coverings are not considered an acceptable substitute for social distancing. Interactions within six (6) feet of a positive case for more than fifteen (15) minutes will be considered exposure regardless if either person is wearing a cloth face covering.

Cloth face coverings should be washed after each use. Cloth face coverings should be replaced frequently as consistent washing will degrade the fabric and decrease the effectiveness.

It is important to always remove face coverings correctly and wash your hands after handling or touching a used face covering. For more information, visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

As this situation changes, the Cole County Health Department will be posting additional information at colehealth.org on a regular basis. If you have questions, please consult a factual source, such as <http://www.CDC.gov> or www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus. The community can also call MDHSS 24-hour hotline (877) 435-8411 to address questions or concerns related to COVID-19.
