



Our Vision: Healthy People in Healthy Communities
Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties

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Local health officials participate in statewide monitoring for COVID-19, no confirmed cases in South Heartland District

Hastings, Neb – With the first cases of coronavirus confirmed in Nebraska, the South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD) is continuing to work closely with the state health department and local healthcare partners to monitor for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Currently, there are no known cases of COVID-19 in the South Heartland Health District.

According to health director Michele Bever, SHDHD has been monitoring six individuals with travel history to other countries and two individuals with a potential exposure to Nebraska’s first confirmed case. Based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, individuals with travel history to certain countries or potential contact with a confirmed case are self-quarantined and monitored for development of COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days.

“We check in with these individuals twice each day to record their temperatures, ask how they are feeling and note any symptoms they are experiencing,” Bever said. “So far, all six travelers have completed their 14-day quarantine with no symptoms appearing.”

“We’re asking people with travel to Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Iran, Italy, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and China in the last 14 days to self-report to the Nebraska public health online system at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>.” Bever said.

Bever said that state and local health officials are asking any individuals who return from overseas travel or who may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 to contact the local health department for guidance and next steps.

Bever said SHDHD is the lead agency for local public health response, but they are working closely with three local hospitals - Mary Lanning Healthcare, Brodstone Memorial in Superior and Webster County Community Hospital in Red Cloud - as well as schools and colleges, government officials, and community organizations and county emergency managers in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties.

Local health officials request that patients call ahead before their appointments with any medical or mental health providers, clinics or hospitals regardless of the type of or reason for the appointment. Please call your healthcare provider BEFORE you come to your appointment if:

1. You have symptoms including:
 - Fever
 - Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
2. You have traveled anywhere outside of the state
3. You have been within 6 feet of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 coronavirus

According to Mary Lanning Chief Medical Officer Dr. Abel Luksan, “Doing so not only protects you and your family, but it also keeps people who have other medical issues safe from coronavirus, colds and influenza.”

Rebecca Hedstrom, Infection Prevention RN at Brodstone Memorial Hospital, stated “The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.”

Hedstrom along with Diane Littrell, Brodstone’s Emergency Response Coordinator, said that Brodstone is working diligently on a plan for preparedness and collaborating with SHDHD in awareness and preparation for COVID-19.

According to Hedstrom, people can help protect themselves and others from respiratory viruses, including the common cold, influenza and coronaviruses by practicing these simple, everyday preventive actions:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick and staying home if you are sick.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throwing the tissue in the trash, or consider coughing or sneezing into your sleeve.
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

“Our priority is to protect our South Heartland residents,” Bever said. “This means ensuring residents and community leaders have access to the most current information and that they know what they can do to help keep themselves, their families, their employees and communities at low risk.”

Bever encourages residents to stay informed. She suggests SHDHD’s website www.southheartlandhealth.org for local information and updates, as well as links to the state and national websites. Residents may call the health department toll free: 1-877-238-7595 with concerns or questions.

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