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For Immediate Release

Contact: Myra Stoney, Health Director, director@swhealth.ne.gov, 308-345-4223

Travel Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As of March 23rd, 2020, Nebraska has 52 cases of COVID-19 compared to approximately 21 cases 5 days ago. None of these cases are in the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) nine-county health district. As the number of cases in Nebraska begins to increase, everyone has a role to play in getting ready and helping their community stay healthy.

The best way to minimize the COVID-19 virus spread in Nebraska is to minimize travel and maximize the amount of social distancing among travelers returning to Nebraska. SWNPHD has provided the following guidance for residents of Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

Travel Outside the US: Returning travelers from regions with widespread sustained transmission are required to self-quarantine for 14 days from the time they return to the US. CDC Level 3 Alert countries are listed at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices#alert>. All other travelers returning from outside the US are recommended to self-quarantine for 14 days following their return.

Travel Inside the US: Returning travelers from regions of the US with widespread transmission should self-quarantine for 14 days after returning to Nebraska (e.g. Colorado, California, New York, Washington, etc.). All other out-of-state travelers returning via public transportation (air, train, bus), from any other international or domestic location, should limit public interactions, practice strict social distancing, self-monitor for symptoms, and self-quarantine for 14 days if feasible.

Commuters crossing state borders are not considered a risk group and are not addressed in these policy recommendations.

All returning travelers, from any international or domestic location, have an increased risk of COVID-19 infection and should limit public interactions, practice strict social distancing, and self-monitor for symptoms. If any returning traveler develops fever or respiratory illness, they need to immediately self-isolate and report to the health department. If symptoms are severe or medical attention is needed, contact a healthcare provider and be sure to tell them where you traveled. If symptoms are mild, follow home care guidance and self-isolate until 7 days after onset and 72 hours symptom-free.

Healthcare Worker Exemption: Every healthcare worker who returns from travel should consult with a trained medical professional at their facility (infection preventionist or physician) and establish a specific infection control protocol (e.g. home quarantine, self-monitoring, PPE while at work) that mitigates patient and co-worker exposures.

Useful Definitions

Social distancing: Practicing social distancing means individuals are consciously avoiding gatherings of people. Those practicing social distancing may avoid handshakes and hugs and will stand an appropriate distance from others when speaking. Individuals who practice social distancing may still need to attend public places, but will avoid mass gatherings, and maintain a distance of approximately 6 feet from others when possible.

Self-quarantine: If you have possibly been exposed to COVID-19, you can self-monitor yourself at home by taking your own temperature and being aware of your symptoms. If you develop a fever (100.4 degrees F or greater), shortness of breath, or cough you should contact the health department. Quarantine involves staying at home, not having visitors and not going out in public, including small gatherings of less than 10 people, in order to help avoid the spread of disease.

Self-isolation: If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19 that do not require medical care you should self-isolate at home. Isolation means separating the person infected with a communicable disease and potentially infectious from those who are not infected to prevent spread of the communicable disease. At home this means having a separate bedroom and bathroom for the ill person and avoiding contact with other household members. Isolation for public health purposes may be voluntary or compelled by federal, state, or local public health order.

When to discontinue self-isolation:

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and who are directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as not having fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (no more cough or shortness of breath); and,
- At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

For more information, contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook or at 501 Broadway in Imperial (5th St. entrance). Information can also be found on the website www.swhealth.ne.gov and on Facebook and Twitter.

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