

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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What to Do If You Suspect Coronavirus and What to Expect

Glendive, Montana, March 26, 2020 – Dawson County Health Department (DCHD) and Glendive Medical Center (GMC) have been working together to diligently monitor and prepare for COVID-19. As cases rise on the western side of Montana, Dawson County has had no confirmed cases for coronavirus.

Timber Dempewolf, DCHD Director stated, "Currently, 19 patients have been tested for COVID-19 in Dawson County and we have received 13 negative confirmations so far." COVID-19 tests are in short supply across the globe and Dawson County is no exception. While more are being distributed very soon, DCHD and GMC are working together to educate the public on what to do if an individual experiences respiratory symptoms and what to expect upon coming in to the clinic or hospital for care.

"The first thing people should know is not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19," stated MJ Marx, Director of Quality for GMC, "if your symptoms are mild, meaning you can manage them at home with medicine and rest, then you do not need to come in for testing. We ask that you quarantine yourself until your symptoms have subsided." MJ went on to state, "Unfortunately, we are in peak season for influenza, strep, allergies, and colds and these can produce similar symptoms to coronavirus, so we understand where people are concerned." GMC is asking patients to call ahead for appointments as restrictions are in place throughout all facilities.

For patients that are sick to the point they would typically see a doctor and medicine is not working to curb a fever or respiratory symptoms, they are asked to first call the Health Information Hotline that is open 6am-10pm, 7 days per week at 406-345-8811. A nurse is available during these hours to discuss symptoms and schedule appointments to visit a clinician. Since influenza is still circulating, the Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is recommending patients that fall into this category get tested for influenza.

If someone is having severe respiratory symptoms, including shortness of breath, they need to call 911 or the GMC Emergency Department directly at 406-345-3314, prior to coming in. "We are taking all precautions to protect other patients and staff and by calling ahead, we can prepare for a patient who may have COVID-19", stated MJ. Patients with COVID-19 may experience fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g.

cough, difficulty breathing). Patients who do not require hospitalization, but have tested positive for COVID-19, will be isolated at home until one of two sets of criteria are met:

1. At least 72 hours have passed since resolution of fever without medicine, the respiratory symptoms have improved, and at least 7 days have passed since the onset of symptoms; OR
2. There is resolution of fever without medicine, the respiratory symptoms are improved, and there are at least two consecutive negative nasal swabs collected greater or equal to 24 hours apart.

A clinician will determine if a patient is a candidate for COVID-19 testing. Hospitalized patients, who have signs and symptoms of COVID-19, or symptomatic high-risk individuals, such as older adults (age 65 or older) and individuals with chronic medical conditions or an immunocompromised state, are at higher risk and therefore, are candidates for the COVID-19 test. Individuals who have symptom onset within 14 days of close contact with a suspect or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient and individuals who have respiratory illness, for which influenza has been ruled out, may also be candidates for COVID-19 testing. Currently, there is no treatment specifically approved for this virus.

Everyone can do their part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses by following these prevention measures:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or coughing into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay at home if you're sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly, including countertops and sinks.

For relevant information from DPHHS, visit: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>.

For up-to-date information about patient and visitor guidelines at GMC, please visit www.gmc.org/COVID-19

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