



## **Quad Cities COVID-19 Coalition**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 6, 2020

#### **Current COVID-19 case count**

**Scott County** – 11 new cases reported for a total of 52

**Rock Island County** – 5 new cases reported for a total of 51

Both Scott and Rock Island counties have reporting a large increase in the number of positive COVID-19 positive tests since Friday, but health officials say those numbers don't necessarily indicate a spike in cases.

It does indicate that COVID-19 is spreading widely in the community and an individual can be exposed to COVID-19 without even realizing it, said Ed Rivers, director of the Scott County Health Department. Social and physical distancing remains the best way to prevent further spread of the disease.

#### **Masks**

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released updated guidance about the use of cloth face coverings. This guidance recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other physical distancing of at least 6 feet is difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. The use of simple cloth face coverings is intended to help slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

"You will notice I did not say mask; I said cloth face coverings," Rivers said. "Surgical masks and N-95 masks are important personal protective equipment that is needed for our health care workers and first responders. Members of the public should not use these masks in order to help preserve them for those workers that need them."

In addition, wearing a mask in public does **NOT** minimize the need to practice physical distancing and handwashing. These will still be our greatest tools for helping slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

"Remember, if you're listening to our plea to stay home as much as you can, your likelihood of catching the virus is decreased," Rivers said. "And your likelihood to spread the virus is decreased."

#### **Taking control of your health**

As we talked last week, individuals in our community have been asked to make sacrifices and stay home for the safety of our community. And we are asking our community to continue this "stay at home" effort, knowing that it will help us save lives.

We know that an event such as this makes many of us feel like we have very little control of our circumstances. Individuals in our community have the tools to help control how they respond to the spread of COVID-19.

These tools included:

- Staying home as much as possible. Staying home will save lives.
- Maintaining 6 feet distance between themselves and others when it's necessary to be in public locations (grocery stores and pharmacies) and when outdoors.
- Cleaning and sanitizing high touch areas of your home and workspace. If your employer has a routine sanitizing process in place already, great! If you have the ability to sanitize your workspace yourself, great! Make sure it gets sanitized!
- Washing your hands ... whether it's with soap and hot water OR with hand sanitizer. We know that cleaning your hands is the best protection against the virus entering your body.

"You're in control of how you respond. And our community needs you," Rivers said.

### **Caring for animals**

We are hearing about animals becoming infected with COVID-19, including a tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York. This situation is continually being evaluated as new information comes to light.

Experts believe that dogs and cats are not easily infected with this virus, and the risk of transmission to humans is small compared to the risk of human-to-human transmission, said Nita Ludwig, administrator of the Rock Island County Health Department.

In addition to other prevention measures, people with COVID-19 and in-home isolation are advised to limit interaction with household animals. While a person infected with COVID-19 is symptomatic, he or she should:

- Maintain separation from household animals as they would with other household members
- Avoid direct contact with pets, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, sleeping in the same location, and sharing food.
- Designate someone who is not ill to care for pets in the home, if possible.
- Follow standard handwashing practices before and after interacting with the pet
- Coordinate care with the pet's veterinarian, and just like with visits to physicians, you should call ahead and inform staff that the pet has been exposed to COVID-19. Veterinarians can test for COVID-19 with state veterinarian approval.

Residents are urged to make a plan for their animals to be cared for if they are unable to do it themselves. It's easier to have those conversations about the continuing care of loved ones – including pets – before a crisis strikes.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, service animals should be permitted to remain with their handlers.

### **Handling stress**

Rich Whitaker, chief executive officer of Vera French Mental Health Center in Davenport, offers tips on dealing with stress in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vera French is a member of the Quad Cities Behavioral Health Coalition.

We all are under stress – maybe more stress than we realize, he said. It’s normal to feel stress when we are placed in situations that feel outside of our control, and it’s normal to feel stressed when worrying about our community, our loved ones, our friends, and ourselves.

Signs of stress include:

- A disrupted diet, which includes eating more than usual OR it could be a loss of appetite, even indigestion and heartburn are often brought on by stress.
- Disrupted sleep is another sign of stress, including difficulty getting to sleep, not staying asleep due to feelings of panic or nightmares that wake you up. It could also include sleeping too much.
- Stress can cause trouble with our emotions and thought processes. Irritability, a change in mood, or even an inability to focus and trouble remembering things can all signal high stress.
- Disrupted relationships are another warning sign of high stress.

Whitaker offered four ways to reduce your stress and improve your body’s natural immune system:

- Make sure you take care of your body by practicing good daily hygiene, getting some exercise every day, eating balanced meals, and drinking plenty of water.
- Protect your ability to get a good night’s sleep. Give yourself time to unwind each night by listening to relaxing music, reading a good book, or just unplugging from media outlets. “I can’t overemphasize how important it is to take time to unplug from news and social media for at least 2 hours each day. Give yourself and your brain a break,” he said.
- Share your feelings with a supportive listener. A trusted friend, family member, pastor, or peer support helper can provide reassurance and understanding and help you think through options.
- Stay focused on what you can control: wash your hands at every opportunity with soap and warm water or hand sanitizer every chance you get; practice physical distancing whenever you are out and wear a mask to protect others; and choose to think about positive things and count your blessings to help you keep a balanced perspective.

“It’s so important to talk about what you are going through, but sometimes you need more than just a listening ear to help with overwhelming stress and anxiety,” Whitaker said. “During this time when you might not want to visit a clinic to speak with your doctor or a mental health professional, most service providers are available by phone or video conference. Telehealth is a great opportunity during these times and talking to your doctor or mental health provider about your stressors and anxiety will help to reassure you and reduce your stress.”

### **National Public Health Week**

This week is National Public Health Week. “In the midst of the most challenging public health crisis of our lifetimes, it’s more important than ever to celebrate public health and recognize the important work we do on our community’s behalf,” Ludwig said.

The COVID-19 pandemic means public health is the topic of the day worldwide, but most public health work is done at the local level:

- We are tracking all reportable infectious diseases and working with patients and physicians for contact tracing — not only COVID-19.

- We make sure the food served at local restaurants is safe through frequent inspections.
- We make sure infants, children and adults stay on schedule for life-saving immunizations.
- We offer nutrition education and supplemental food for pregnant and postpartum women, babies and children through our WIC programs.
- With our close partners in the healthcare systems, we engage the community to identify health areas that need improvement and write a plan to make them happen.

“We are working for your health during this pandemic, and we will forge forward when life returns to normal. We believe health and well-being are basic human rights.” Ludwig said. “Please join us in celebrating the public health workforce this week and beyond.”

### **Unite Quad Cities for COVID-19 Recovery**

The Greater Quad Cities Community Foundation is sponsoring an event Monday to support the Quad Cities Disaster Recovery Fund. “Unite Quad Cities for COVID-19 Recovery,” is a 24-hour giving event taking place today. We encourage members of our community to consider this and other opportunities to support the COVID-19 response in our community. Information on local opportunities is available at TogetherQC.com.

### **More information and video**

- Together Quad Cities: Keep Staying Home: [https://youtu.be/\\_GG0hRvJ0So](https://youtu.be/_GG0hRvJ0So)
- IDPH COVID-19 PSA (television): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvsF02uCM-M&feature=youtu.be>
- IDPH COVID-19 PSA (radio): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xznWLKeZO3E&feature=youtu.be>
- [www.TogetherQC.com](http://www.TogetherQC.com)

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