

## **FAQs: COVID-19 in Humboldt County, Nevada**

Updated: July 22, 2020

### **Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

A: Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days and as many as 14. They may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, upset stomach or diarrhea and/or severe respiratory illness.

### **Q: How does COVID-19 spread?**

A: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 is thought to mainly spread from close contact (i.e., within about 6 feet) with a person who is currently sick with the virus. COVID-19 spreads primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory infections spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### **Q: Where can I be screened for COVID-19 in Humboldt County?**

A: Screening for COVID-19 is provided in Humboldt General Hospital's Clinic Suite C, which may be accessed from the ramp entrance on Mizpah Street. Residents should call (775) 623-5222, ext. 1379, to alert staff and then wait for assistance. The healthcare provider will provide diagnosis and treatment, including medication prescriptions; orders for respiratory, radiology and/or laboratory testing; recommendations for level of care (including home care and possible self-isolation); and/or testing for COVID-19. The screening clinic is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and closed for lunch from noon to 1 p.m. All patients who are experiencing respiratory illness should avoid the main hospital and go directly to the screening clinic location. After hours and on weekends, patients who have severe symptoms of fever, cough and difficulty breathing should go to the HGH Emergency Department. Residents also may call the COVID-19 Hotline, which is available to direct residents with symptoms (fever, dry cough and shortness of breath) and to answer questions. Local residents may call (775) 777-2507 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or text or email questions to COVID19@elkocountynv.net. Se habla español.

### **Q: How long between when a person is exposed to the virus and when they start showing symptoms?**

A: On average, the time from exposure to symptom onset (known as the incubation period) is about five to six days. However, studies have shown that symptoms can appear as soon as two days after exposure and as long as 14 days later.

### **Q: What is the treatment for COVID-19?**

A: There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19:

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, go to the HGH Emergency Department or call 9-1-1 for help. Be sure to notify any healthcare providers that you have or may have COVID-19.
- Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- Stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. If possible, use a separate bathroom. If you must be around others, wear a facemask.

**Q: How long does it take to recover from COVID-19?**

A: For people with mild disease, recovery time is about two weeks, while people with severe or critical disease recover within three to six weeks.

**Q: Can face masks help prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

A: Yes, face masks combined with other preventive measures, such as social distancing and frequent hand washing, help slow the spread of the virus. Research now shows that countries that required face masks, testing, isolation and social distancing early in the pandemic seem to have had success slowing the spread of the virus.

**Q: Why weren't face masks recommended at the start of the pandemic?**

A: In early 2020, experts didn't yet know the extent to which people with COVID-19 could spread the virus before symptoms appeared. Nor was it known that some people have COVID-19 but never have any symptoms. Both groups can unknowingly spread the virus to others. These discoveries led the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to update its guidance to recommend widespread use of face coverings to help prevent transmission of the virus by people who have COVID-19 but don't know it. Some public health groups argue that masks should be reserved for health care providers and point to the critical shortage of surgical masks and N95 masks. The CDC acknowledged this concern when it recommended cloth masks for the public and not the surgical and N95 masks needed by health care providers.

**Q: Where can I get a mask in Humboldt County?**

A: The Mucca Mask Makers have voluntarily sewn over 6,000 masks for Humboldt County residents and businesses. The group keeps stocks of free cloth masks at Olsen's Pharmacy and Ridley's Pharmacy. The group also is managing a stock of masks that were allotted to Humboldt County. For requests, local residents may message the group on Facebook @MuccaMaskMakers.

**Q: Is there a certain way to wear a cloth mask?**

A: Here are a few pointers for putting on and taking off a cloth mask:

- Place your mask over your mouth and nose.
- Tie it behind your head or use ear loops and make sure it's snug.
- Don't touch your mask while wearing it.

- If you accidentally touch your mask, wash or sanitize your hands.
- Remove the mask by untying it or lifting off the ear loops without touching the front of the mask or your face.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing your mask.
- Regularly wash your mask with soap and water in the washing machine. It's fine to launder it with other clothes.

Also, here are a few face mask precautions:

- Don't put masks on anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or otherwise unable to remove the mask without help.
- Don't put masks on children under 2 years of age.
- Don't use face masks as a substitute for social distancing.

**Q: Can COVID-19 be spread by asymptomatic individuals?**

A: Yes, asymptomatic transmission is possible. People can shed the virus before they have symptoms, but this is thought to be less common than individuals with symptoms. One reason people are asked to wear masks is to prevent them from spreading the virus if they are asymptomatic.

**Q: How are COVID-19 cases attributed to Humboldt County?**

A: The state attributes cases to each county based on where the affected person self-quarantines, not where he or she tests. For instance, if a person tests in another county but then comes to Humboldt County to self-quarantine, that is a Humboldt County case. On the other hand, if a person tests in Humboldt County but then goes to a different county or state to self-quarantine, that case is not attributed to Humboldt County.

**Q: What is contact tracing?**

A: Contact tracing is the process of identifying persons who may have come into contact with a person infected with COVID-19. Once contact tracers become aware of a person who may have COVID-19 or who has tested positive, they work immediately to first isolate that person so they do not spread the virus further, and then they work with that person directly to understand who they have come into contact with. Contact tracers track a spider-like web of transmission, following each person who may have been infected by asking about their contacts, and tracing those contacts' contacts, as necessary.

**Q: Who are Humboldt County's contact tracers?**

A: Humboldt County's contact tracers were initially members of the State of Nevada's epidemiological team. In April 2020, Humboldt County formed its own contract tracing team under the direction of the Humboldt County Health Officer, whose members were then formally trained and acknowledged by the state. This has allowed for a much more rapid response to confirmed cases and their potentially infected contacts, and has served to greatly slow the spread of COVID-19 in Humboldt County.

**Q: Why do public news releases about new cases almost always say the case was a “close contact” of a previously reported case? Doesn’t that mean contact tracing is not working?**

A: Actually that means contact tracing is working exactly as it should. It means contact tracers have rapidly identified close contacts of a confirmed case, helped those people be tested, and worked to isolate any that were infected before they could infect other people.

**Q: What does it mean when a public news release about a new case says the case “remains under investigation?”**

A: A case remains under investigation when a person is not sure how or where they became infected. The person may have contracted the virus through an asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic carrier (a person who is infected but does not show symptoms); from a person who has symptoms but has not been identified as a personal contact of the case; or from a surface that contains the virus.

**Q: What’s the process to declare someone “recovered” from COVID-19?**

A: When COVID-19 arrived in Nevada, and subsequently Humboldt County, the state was recovering based on total number of days because testing supplies were low. Once testing supplies were adequate, the state went to a testing-based release system where people had to be cleared through two consecutive tests 24 hours apart. However, researchers found that as people heal from the virus they shed viral particles that can show a positive antigen test, so retesting people was found to be of limited utility. The state and Humboldt County are now moving back to a time/symptom process where all people who have tested positive for the virus must wait 14 days from the time of their positive test and be symptom free in order to be declared “recovered.” Of course, that doesn't take into account those who have been more than mildly ill and others who have experienced true secondary infections. There also is a very involved administrative process to officially recover someone.

**Q: Can someone who has had COVID-19 spread the illness to others?**

A: People are thought to be most contagious when they are symptomatic (the sickest). That is why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. The virus also has been detected in asymptomatic persons. How long someone is actively sick can vary based on disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and the results of laboratory testing for that patient. In Humboldt County, people who have tested positive for COVID-19 must be in respiratory isolation for 14 days since the time of testing and be symptom-free at the time of their release.

**Q: What should I do if I have had close contact with someone with COVID-19?**

A: The answer depends on the degree of contact you had with that person. COVID-19 mainly spreads from person to person through droplets when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. This means that the biggest risk for catching it is to be in close contact for a significant amount of time with someone who has COVID-19. There isn’t an exact definition of what that means, but generally “close contact” means being within 6 feet of someone for at least 10 minutes. If you were just grocery shopping in the same store as someone who might have COVID-19, that would not be considered a high

risk—unless that person coughs or sneezes directly on you, which is a clear exposure. People who do come in close, significant contact with a COVID-19 case should self-quarantine for 14 days. This involves staying home and limiting interactions with others—even if you don't get sick. People can have the virus and pass it on to others even if they aren't showing any symptoms, so self-quarantining is critical to help prevent the spread. If you develop symptoms such as cough, fever or shortness of breath, you should be tested at the HGH screening clinic, 118 E. Haskell Street, which is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**Q: How are people notified of their results following a COVID-19 test?**

A: In Humboldt County, people are notified via phone call regarding their positive or negative results. If their results are positive, their information is provided to contact tracers for follow-up. In the case a person could not be reached by phone, local or state health authorities would send a letter via certified mail with results; however, to date, Humboldt County has never shared results in a letter format.