



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Bremer County COVID-19 Update

As you are all well aware, there is an expanding global outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19). For the general public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is low. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Those most at risk of the virus are older adults, and individuals with underlying health conditions.

The Bremer County Health Department, along with the Iowa Department of Public Health, and other public and private partners continue to prepare plans and procedures in case they should be needed. It is important for all Iowans to prepare for COVID-19 in the same way we would prepare for severe weather or other events that could disrupt normal routines.

Make a plan and discuss it with your family. What would you do if you could not go to work because of illness? What if you have children and your daycare providers were ill? How would you get groceries if you were ill? These are all questions to think about.

It is normal to be concerned about a new virus. Being uncertain and anxious about COVID-19 is normal, especially with reports of illness and death in other countries.

- **Stay Calm-** It's important to not pass along or spread misinformation. Recognize when other people's fears and anxieties are influencing your own emotional or mental health. When we integrate other's fears and anxieties into our own emotional or mental state, we act and make decisions out of fear, rather than facts.
- **Keep up-to-date-** For topics that cause significant anxiety, people find themselves better able to cope if they feel knowledgeable about the topic. Use trusted resources, such as [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) (IDPH).
- **Unplug-** Information, real or fake, is a constant in today's society. It is important to have the facts and stay up-to-date, but when information creates a barrier to daily functioning, it can increase fear and anxiety. Be aware of how plugged in you are and to what you are exposing yourself.
- **Prioritize good sleep, exercise and healthy eating choices-** Stress affects your immune system response. Make a list of priorities and include commitments to 8 hours of sleep, adequate exercise and healthy eating choices.
- **Focus on Preparedness-** Be informed; be educated. One way to address anxiety is to focus on the circumstances you can control. Taking efforts to control what you can, like washing your hands and other prevention strategies, will help to lessen the stress caused by the fear of the unknown. Both the CDC and IDPH websites have resources on prevention and preparedness.

It is important to understand that the risk of influenza is much higher than the risk of COVID-19 in Iowa right now. Iowa Flu Reports can be found [here](#).

Prevention of COVID-19 is the same as that for other respiratory illnesses (like the flu):

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper arm/elbow
- Clean your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Contain germs by staying home when ill

Iowa has also created a public hotline established for Iowans with questions about COVID-19. The line is available 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

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