



March 4, 2020

**This is a public health message about the novel coronavirus from
Lewis County Public Health & Social Services.**

The Lewis County Health Officer, Dr. Rachel Wood, has briefed the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners staff, indicating that COVID-19 has probably been circulating in Washington for several weeks. She encourages the public to stay informed and practice the same preventive measures used for the common flu season.

As of March 3, there have been no confirmed cases in Lewis County.

Currently the risk to the general public remains low. To slow the spread of the virus and reduce your chance of getting sick, Dr. Wood advises everyone to:

- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then throw it away, or cough into your elbow
- Stay away from people who are sick
- Stay home when you are sick
- Frequently clean surfaces that get touched a lot – counters, keyboards, your cell phone, door knobs, handles, etc.

As reported in the media, the coronavirus symptoms are similar to the common flu. The vast majority of reported cases have experienced mild illness (similar to a common cold). However, some may develop severe pneumonia that requires hospitalization. Children seems to be at lower risk of getting sick from this virus.

If you do get sick, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you're sick, stay home. Seek medical care if you have trouble breathing or if your symptoms worsen. Otherwise, sick people should stay home. A common question right now is, "Why can't I get tested?" The answer: Not everyone needs to be tested. And, people with flu-like symptoms are not being tested for COVID-19 unless they meet certain criteria set by the CDC. The criteria are set by the CDC as a condition of the FDA-approved

emergency use authorization, which allows new tests to be used in an emergency situation on high-risk people only. That criteria has widened in the last week to include people who are hospitalized with symptoms that are otherwise unexplained. That is in addition to testing people with travel history, and people with contacts to a known case. These criteria may evolve to include more people over time.

Dr. Wood said we can expect the number of confirmed cases to increase as we begin more testing. However, she cautions that higher numbers does not necessarily mean it is spreading. It could just mean that additional tests are identifying people we (and perhaps they) did not know were infected.

The latest COVID-19 information is always available from the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus. We encourage you to follow @LCPHSS on Twitter for local information.

The state Department of Health has also established a call center to address questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington State, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call 1-800-525-0127 and press #.

