



NEK Multi-County Health Departments, Inc

312 Pennsylvania
Holton, KS 66436
785-364-2670 Phone
785-364-3001 Fax

Media Release

03/15/2019

For Immediate Release

Holton, Kan. Jackson County Health Officer Angela Reith, RN, BSN has today ordered that all Jackson County School Districts suspend classroom and extracurricular activities for one week, starting on Monday March 16th, as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19. School buildings can remain open during this period of classroom and activity suspension, and staff can report to school as needed.

This decision has been made pursuant to K.S.A. 65-119 and is due to the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in nearby areas and concerns regarding the high number of students and staff returning from international and domestic trips where COVID-19 transmission has been detected. Early action to slow the spread of COVID-19 is a proactive approach to help keep staff, students, and the entire Jackson County healthy. Currently infection risks remain low in Jackson County and this is a precautionary action.

The decision to suspend classroom and extracurricular activities was made in joint consultation with the three Jackson County school districts and under recommendation from the Kansas State Board of Education. Schools represent a high risk environment for virus transmission due to the close contact of students and staff for prolonged periods of time. A large number of new infections within a short window of time (initiated by students and faculty unknowingly infected during their travels) could result from concentrated public gatherings without adequate precautions. The rapid spread of local infections could potentially cause a large increase of cases in our community and put a strain on the ability of our public health and health care infrastructure to respond adequately.

This school closure period will allow for all school districts to screen students and staff for symptoms and possible exposure during travel during spring break. At the end of the one week period, public health and school officials will reevaluate the situation.

Jackson County officials understand the inconvenience that this decision may cause. However, the first priority of the Jackson County Health Department is to protect the health and wellbeing of the entire community. The Jackson County Health Department will continue to work closely with the school districts to support their efforts and assist staff, students, and their families during this difficult time.

The Jackson County Health Department is asking for school, staff and students to review the new guidance from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment below. Students and staff of Holton please call 785-364-3650 from 8:00 a.m. to Noon tomorrow. Jackson Heights please call 785-364-2244 or 785-364-2194. Royal Valley please call 785-966-2246 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is issuing new guidance today surrounding COVID-19, including travelers, close contacts of confirmed cases and those being tested.

KDHE is now recommending 14-day home quarantine for Kansans who have:

- Traveled to a state with known widespread community transmission (currently California, New York, and Washington state) on or after March 15.
- Visited Eagle, Summit, Pitkin, and Gunnison counties in Colorado within the past week.
- Traveled on a cruise ship on or after March 15.
 - o People who have previously been told by Public Health to quarantine because of their cruise ship travel should finish out their quarantine.
- Traveled internationally on or after March 15.
 - o People who have previously been told by Public Health to quarantine because of their international travel should finish out their quarantine.
- Received notification from public health officials (state or local) that you are a close contact of a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19. You should quarantine at home for 14 days since your last contact with the case. (A close contact is defined as someone who has been closer than 6 feet for more than 10 minutes while the patient is symptomatic.)

“We know there are a lot of questions and concerns from people,” Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, said. “One thing we want to stress is that having contact with someone who may have been exposed to someone who may be a COVID-19 case is not a reason to worry or quarantine yourself. Public health officials will notify you if you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.”

-continued-

There is no need for returning travelers to notify KDHE about their return. Information on COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and states with community transmission can be found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

Home Quarantine Guidelines

Those who are under home quarantine should not attend school, work or any other setting where they are not able to maintain at about a 6-foot distance from other people.

If a person under quarantine develops symptoms of COVID-19 during their 14-day quarantine period, including a measured fever of 100.4 (F) or higher and lower respiratory symptoms like coughing or shortness of breath, they should contact their healthcare provider and tell them about their recent travel or other COVID-19 exposure.

Testing for COVID-19

Healthcare providers should evaluate exposure history and symptoms and call KDHE if COVID-19 is suspected. KDHE only approves COVID-19 testing requests from healthcare providers and local health departments.

People who are currently being tested for COVID-19 should remain in home isolation, or hospital isolation if symptoms are severe enough to be hospitalized, until test results are available. If the test result is negative, isolation is no longer required. If test results are positive for COVID-19, the person must remain in isolation until released by public health.

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid spreading the virus and to avoid being exposed to the virus. The virus is thought to spread between people who are within about 6 feet of each other for at least 10 minutes through droplets from coughing and sneezing.

To reduce risk, everyone should:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces daily.

For more information, please visit the KDHE website at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus. KDHE has a phone bank that is staffed Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. The phone number is 1-866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF). KDHE also has an email address for general inquiries, COVID-19@ks.gov. Please note these contacts are for general questions and cannot provide you with medical evaluations. If you are feeling ill, please stay home and call your healthcare provider.