CONTACT TRACING FOR CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

Kirksville, MO 3/23/2020 – As of today, one person in Adair County has tested positive for Coronavirus COVID-19, and one physician from Columbia, Missouri, who saw patients at the George Rea Cancer Center in Kirksville, has tested positive in Boone County. Both are in self-isolation.

The Adair County Health Department has received calls from several patients who saw the physician last Thursday during his normal clinic hours at the Kirksville cancer center location. The Health Department is obtaining from Missouri Cancer Associates in Columbia, MO, which operates the cancer center, a complete list of patients seen there on March 19, 2020. Staff from the Health Department will contact all patients to obtain information necessary to monitor them and to conduct contact tracing to identify others who could be at risk for exposure. Currently, the Adair County Health Department is advising those patients to self-quarantine for 14 days, take their temperatures at least twice daily, and to contact their healthcare providers immediately if they begin to experience any of the symptoms of COVID-19.

Complete Family Medicine is managing the monitoring and medical care for the known Adair County case.

"One of our primary responsibilities during any infectious disease event is contact tracing," Jim LeBaron, Adair County Health Department administrator, said. "This process helps us identify people who might have had potential for exposure so we can get out ahead on some cases and monitor people for that potential exposure," he said.

When the Health Department is notified of a positive test result, its staff contacts the individual who tested positive to ask multiple questions about where that person has been and who that person has come into contact with.

"We obtain as much information as necessary, then start contacting everyone we can identify who might have had any chance of exposure to the infected individual," LeBaron said. "We ask the potentially exposed person about any symptoms they might currently have and educate them about the symptoms of the disease. We ask them to self-quarantine for 14 days and to contact their healthcare provider immediately if they begin to have any symptoms of COVID-19," he said.

The Health Department also works with emergency services to flag addresses of households of confirmed and potential cases of infectious diseases so first responders and emergency medical services staff can take appropriate precautions with personal protective equipment and patient contact. People who call 911 in an emergency can expect the dispatcher to ask screening questions related to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. All of these measures are designed to protect first responders from exposure.

"Even if the potentially exposed people are suffering no symptoms at all, they could in the future," LeBaron said. "That's why it's vital that they remain quarantined, to reduce exposure to even more people. And that's why it's so important that everyone in this community avoids going out in public as much as possible and practices social distancing. That's what can make the difference in reducing the spread of this disease," he said.

The Adair County Health Department, advises that residents continue to take the following measures to reduce transmission of the disease:

- Practice social distancing at all times. That means keeping six feet or more between you and other people.
- If you feel sick, stay at home and call your doctor. Do not go to work. Do not go anywhere. If you are having difficulty breathing and/or chest pain, call 911.
- If your children are sick, keep them home and call their doctor.
- If you are an older person, stay home and away from other people.
- If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.
- Work or engage in schooling from home whenever possible. If you have to go to work, ask your employer about taking steps to protect your health, including taking temperatures of employees and putting more space between them.
- Avoid social/family gatherings.
- Avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts. Use drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options.
- Avoid travel, shopping trips, and social visits unless they're absolutely necessary.
- Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.

- Practice good hygiene by washing your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface. Avoid touching your face. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces often.

The Adair County Health Department continues regular operations during this time. Home health nurses and therapists continue to see patients, WIC services continue, as well as immunizations on a case-by-case basis, infectious and communicable disease services, and environmental services.

If you need to contact the Adair County Health Department, call 660-665-8491, visit our website at www.adair.lphamo.org, or our Facebook page.