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*For Immediate Release*

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Community Update**

**March 2, 2020, Jackson, Wyo.** -- The Teton County Health Department and St John's Health are actively monitoring an outbreak of a disease called COVID-19 that is occurring around the world and in other parts of the United States. COVID-19 is caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that emerged in China in early December 2019 and continues to spread in several countries, including the United States.

**Currently, there have been no reported cases in Wyoming and the risk to our Teton County residents from the disease remains low.**

The Teton County Health Department believes the risk for contracting the disease is primarily among travelers to other countries with community transmission. Community transmission or community spreading is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) when people have been infected with the virus in an area and in some cases, it is uncertain where or how they became infected. However, it is becoming increasingly likely that COVID-19 will eventually spread to Wyoming.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which can cause disease in both humans and animals. As a newly emerging infection, COVID-19 warrants special attention. There are some characteristics of COVID-19 that are not well understood at this time, including how easily it spreads from person to person and how many people may experience severe illness. Recent data suggest that elderly people and those with pre-existing medical conditions may be at the greatest risk from this disease. There is currently no vaccine.

### **What's Happening in Wyoming & Teton County**

The Teton County Health Department is working with the Wyoming Department of Health, St. John's Health, and other local partners throughout Teton County to prepare for possible cases in our community. "The Health Department is continually monitoring the situation. We are using our Incident Command System to ensure effective communication and coordination with all involved agencies," said Jodie Pond, Teton County Health Director.

Dr. Travis Riddell, Teton County Health Officer, advises Teton County residents to stay informed about COVID-19 and to look for updates and recommendations from credible sources such as the Wyoming Department of Health and the CDC. Riddell says, "This is a continually changing situation. Arming yourself with the most current information is important."

Symptoms of the COVID-19 virus include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Health officials are encouraging individuals to take the following steps to help prevent spreading:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

### **If You Have Symptoms**

St. John's Health is following CDC guidelines for assessing and treating patients with possible exposure to COVID-19. Anyone who suspects they may have been exposed to the virus should call their physician to determine the need to come to a clinic or the hospital to be evaluated.

"In order to minimize the spread of illness, we are asking that patients stay at home or in their hotel room until a health provider determines whether medical attention is necessary," said St. John's Health communications officer Karen Connelly.

Anyone with possible COVID-19 exposure who is experiencing a medical emergency should call St. John's Health at 307-733-3636 prior to arriving at the medical center. St. John's staff will provide information about precautions to help prevent the spread of the virus, including instruction about using a dedicated entrance to avoid public areas and waiting rooms.

### **For the Latest Information**

With spring break just a few weeks away, residents should pay close attention to special travel recommendations from the CDC, which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

For current Coronavirus information and updates from the Teton County Health Department, please go to <https://tetoncountyywy.gov/2061/Coronavirus-Disease-COVID-19>.

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