

NEWS RELEASE

November 23, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Use Caution During the Holidays While Risk Dial is in the Red

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) urges residents to use caution during Thanksgiving and other holidays to avoid spreading COVID-19 among family and friends. This year it will be best to celebrate with people you live with and use online or socially distanced options to connect with others outside your household. Southwest Nebraska is seeing many COVID-19 cases spreading from one household to another due to small gatherings with family and friends. If you do choose to visit others or travel this season, be sure to take extra precautions such as carrying hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes or spray, and extra masks.

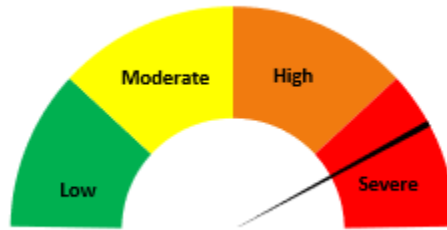
“Nebraskans are in a difficult situation, and our choices are affecting each other more than ever before,” states Heidi Wheeler, Assistant Director at SWNPHD. “As the situation continues to worsen, we ask you to remember those people in your communities who are fighting on the front lines of the pandemic, the healthcare workers who are away from their families so that they can care for yours. Please do what you can to lessen the burden on our hospitals and clinics by choosing to stay at home.”

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of November 23rd is red, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska are at severe risk of contracting COVID-19. SWNPHD asks that residents of the health district stay at home when possible, except for essential errands. If you do leave home, wear a mask or face covering. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should limit their contact with those who work outside the home. All gatherings and events are strongly discouraged until the risk dial is no longer in the red.

SWNPHD had 363 new cases of COVID-19 reported November 17th to November 23rd at noon. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 24; Dundy – 16; Frontier – 22; Furnas – 50; Hayes – 2; Hitchcock – 17; Keith – 105; Perkins – 20; Red Willow – 107. There is community spread occurring in all nine counties. This brings the totals for the health district to 1734 cases with 1156 cases recovered. Three additional deaths due to COVID-19 were also reported.

COVID-19 information is available at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby’s) in McCook.

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COVID RED: Severe Risk of COVID-19 Spread		
General Public	Outside the Home – Work, Social, in Public	At Home
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home unless essential personnel traveling for work, or general public acquiring medical care or food • Distance at least 6 feet from anyone outside the home • Work from home • No contact with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No distancing for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Self-isolation of symptomatic persons
Face Covering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings when outside of the home and near others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No face coverings for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Face coverings for symptomatic people
Hand Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating • Use hand sanitizer when handwashing is inaccessible or infeasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating
Illness Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If ill with Flu-like or COVID-like symptoms, Stay at Home even for essential personnel • Minimize contact with symptomatic people • Daily temperature checks at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily temperature check • Continuously monitor for COVID-19 symptoms • Self-isolation of symptomatic persons • Contact healthcare provider if sick • Monitor the health of anyone in your home with COVID-like symptoms
Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface • Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable • Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface • Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable • Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures)
At-Risk or Vulnerable Population	For adults over age 65, anyone with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home • Rely on help for needs outside the home (groceries, medications, etc.) • Distance from those working outside of the home 	