



# Monroe County Health Department

*Serving the Community since 1921*

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DATE: November 20, 2020

TO: Monroe County News Agencies

FROM: Sharon L. Nelson, RN, Director/Health Officer

RE: Take Action to Save Lives

## TAKE ACTION TO SAVE LIVES

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit a crisis point in Wisconsin and healthcare and public health officials are asking for the public to take action to stop the spread. The levels of COVID-19 are gravely concerning not only in the state of Wisconsin, but in our region and county as well. Monroe County's daily new case counts are higher than ever and they continue to grow rapidly. Locally, every municipality and age range, without exception, continue to see increases in case rates.

As of November 17<sup>th</sup>, Monroe County had 802 confirmed COVID-19 cases. To put this in perspective, there were 701 cases in October alone, and 587 cases combined in March-September. People gathering for parties, weddings, funerals, in crowded bars and other indoor spaces, as well as people going to work sick, continue to contribute to the significant increase in cases. We are in a crisis and we need to take action to **stop the spread**.

Our hospitals are quickly becoming overwhelmed, resulting in extreme stress being placed on our frontline health care workers. Medical facilities are starting to postpone surgeries, procedures and appointments, and restricting visitors. This added strain on our healthcare system affects more than COVID-19 patients, it endangers entire communities. Not only is there a need for COVID-19 related health care during this pandemic, but healthcare workers must continue to attend to car accidents, heart attacks, falls, burst appendixes and many other medical emergencies. If we do not make changes and our numbers continue to rise, medical facilities remain at risk of running out of beds and not having enough staff to care for both COVID and non-COVID patients. Additionally, the risk for more preventable deaths in our community due to COVID and other health issues will increase.

Like healthcare systems, public health departments are strained and finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the ever rising number of cases being reported. There is a desperate need to slow the spread, flatten the curve and protect our communities and population; therefore, we are asking the following of everyone:

- **Stay home**
  - Leave home only for essentials trips such as going to work or school, or picking up groceries or pharmacy items
  - Avoid gathering with people from outside of your immediate household
  - Cancel non-essential travel
  - Find alternatives to Thanksgiving celebrations or deer camp. Gatherings held between members of multiple households is not recommended.
- **Protect Others**
  - Wear your mask
  - Wash your hands frequently
  - Practice physical distancing-stay 6 feet apart if you must be in contact with others
- **Do Not Shorten Quarantine Periods**
  - People can develop COVID-19 2-14 days after exposure. They are also contagious 2 days prior to symptom onset
  - Employers-do not instruct symptomatic or exposed employees to work.
  - A negative test result does not shorten a quarantine
- **If you have symptoms, no matter how mild, stay home**
  - Symptoms of COVID-19 include cough, runny nose, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, chills, fever, loss of taste and smell, shortness of breath
  - A large number of people do not have a fever with COVID-19 and many have only mild cold-like symptoms
- **Support your community**
  - Order take out or pick up items curbside from local businesses

- Wear your mask/face covering. Show others that you care about their health by protecting them from your respiratory droplets

We know this is tiring, and we all long for our lives to return to normal; however, for the time being, we must take action and the steps we know will lessen the spread of the virus. Lives depend on it.

Please do your part; wear masks, socially distance, avoid gatherings and leave home only for essential activities. For more information about COVID-19 visit our website at <http://healthymonroecowi.org/covid-19>.