



News Release

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**Stay Strong, Stay Safe:
CCH encourages community members to keep up the fight against COVID-19**

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – The fight against COVID-19 has gone on for longer than anyone imagined. While it first appeared as though it would be a months-long threat, COVID-19 has now been impacting people’s lives for more than a year.

It is only natural that people are beginning to feel fatigued by the virus and the changes to their lives it caused. But, while hospitalizations from COVID-19 have decreased and the arrival of vaccines has brought new hope, continued safety precautions are still needed. Now is not the time for people to let down their guards.

That’s why Columbus Community Hospital is encouraging community members to stay strong and stay safe by doubling down on the safety measures that have been proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19: masking, social distancing and getting vaccinated as soon as they are eligible to do so.

Masks have been proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19 because they act as an extra layer of protection to trap the respiratory droplets that spread the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people older than 2 years old wear masks in public or any time they are in close contact with someone from outside of their home.

Another important tool to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is social distancing. People are encouraged to maintain 6-feet of distance from people who are not from their household. If they must be closer than that, they should wear a mask. These recommendations go along with advice from Gov. Pete Ricketts who encourages Nebraskans to avoid the three Cs: crowded places, close contact and confined spaces.

The newest tool in the fight against COVID-19 are vaccines – which offer another layer of protection against the virus. At this point, there are two vaccines available, one from Pfizer which has been shown to be 95% effective and one from Moderna which has been shown to be 94% effective in clinical trials. Though the vaccines were developed quickly, they were created using a process that has been around for years and no steps were skipped in the testing



process. No serious safety concerns were found in any of the vaccine trials and both vaccines have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Myths and misinformation about the vaccines are spreading on social media, so people should not learn about the vaccines there. Instead, if people want to educate themselves about the vaccines, they should turn to reliable sources, such as health care institutions, government agencies and or their health care providers. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services also has a COVID-19 information line people can call at 833-998-2275 or 531-249-1873.

In January, Ricketts announced that the state had launched an online portal where Nebraskans can register for the vaccine. People are encouraged to register on vaccinate.nebraska.gov and then they will be notified when they are eligible to receive their vaccine, which will be given for free. The state's vaccination plan is broken up into phases based on people's ages, level of exposure through their work and underlying health conditions. Mass vaccination of the public is not expected to begin until late spring.

Two doses of the vaccine are needed in order for the vaccine to be effective and even after they receive two doses, people are encouraged to wear a mask and continue to practice social distancing.

Free COVID-19 testing remains available at more than 60 TestNebraska locations including, CCH's site which is at 4147 48th Avenue (the Husker Helicopter site location directly north of CCH). To schedule an appointment, visit testnebraska.com or call 402-207-9377. After registering, you will receive a QR code and be assigned a testing appointment at CCH. Sample collection takes no more than five minutes.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it becomes increasingly important for people to focus on caring for their mental health. The anxiety and lifestyle changes caused by COVID-19 are stressful and can take a toll on people's moods and their relationships. Nebraskans are encouraged to call DHHS' Nebraska Family Helpline at 1-888-866-8660 if they need support. The hotline is staffed by trained crisis counselors and is available 24/7.

For more information on how people can stay strong and safe in the fight against COVID-19, visit www.columbushosp.org.

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