



News Release

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**CCH to Begin Offering Surgeries and Other Elective Procedures;
Urges Continued COVID-19 Safety Precautions**

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – Starting in June, Columbus Community Hospital will begin to offer some of the services it has put on hold during the COVID-19 crisis such as elective surgeries, procedures, tests and therapies.

The reopening of these services will be handled with an abundance of caution to ensure the safety of CCH's patients and staff. Throughout the reopening process, CCH will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the community, as well as the availability of health care resources, and make adjustments as needed.

As of Wednesday, May 20, there were 1,020 COVID-19 cases in the East Central District Health District (ECDHD) that includes Platte, Colfax, Nance and Boone counties. At that point, CCH had also performed 1,625 COVID-19 tests with 548 positive and 1,002 negative results. There were 75 tests pending. Since April 25, CCH has cared for a total of 11 COVID-19 positive inpatients and transferred four to larger tertiary care facilities. Also, CCH has cared for 17 persons under investigation (PUIs) who ultimately were negative for COVID-19 but required the same level of care and resources.

The ECDHD recovery rates for COVID-19, per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, as of May 17, are: district-wide: 430, Colfax: 224, Platte: 200, Nance: 4, Boone: 2.

In terms of resources, CCH continues to have the capacity to handle COVID-19 patients. As of May 20, it had four negative pressure rooms in use and 11 negative pressure rooms available. None of CCH's ventilators were in use.

This availability of health care resources is one of the main reasons services like elective surgeries are reopening across the state. Gov. Pete Ricketts has said the integrity of Nebraska's health care system was his top consideration for decisions about reopening businesses and services that have been limited or closed.

Throughout May, the state will be gradually easing the restrictions in its directed health measures to allow for the reopening of these services. As these services reopen, area residents



are encouraged to continue to practice good judgement to protect their health and the health of others.

Elderly individuals and people with underlying health conditions should carefully weigh the risks of participating in the programs and services that are reopening. Just because an activity is permitted, it does not mean it's advisable for everyone. Elderly individuals and people with underlying health conditions should be especially mindful of maintaining social distancing practices even as services reopen.

Likewise, just because these restrictions are being loosened, it doesn't mean that COVID-19 is no longer a threat. To protect the health care system and people's health, Nebraskans are urged to continue practicing COVID-19 safety precautions.

For example, people should follow Gov. Ricketts' Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy:

- Stay home. Do not take unnecessary trips outside the home. Respect the ten-person limit.
- Socially distance your work. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
- Shop alone and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
- Help kids follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports or playgrounds.
- Help seniors stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.
- Exercise daily at home or with an appropriately socially-distanced activity.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services offers similar guidance including:

- Stay six feet away from others
- Wear a cloth face covering in public (grocery stores, pharmacies etc.) when you can't stay six feet away from others.
- Hold conference calls or virtual meetings instead of meeting in person.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash hands right before you eat.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, especially counters, handles, doorknobs, tabletops, remotes and keyboards.

In addition to following these safety precautions, people are encouraged to visit www.TestNebraska.com to take an initial assessment for COVID-19. This information helps determine where Test Nebraska testing sites should be set up and helps provide a better picture of the COVID-19 situation in Nebraska.



CCH will also continue to offer COVID-19 testing through its drive-thru emergency department screening and assessment from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday.

For more information on CCH's COVID-19 policies, visit www.columbushosp.org. For more information on Test Nebraska, visit www.testnebraska.com.

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