



News Release

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**CCH Services Reopen with Ongoing COVID-19 Precautions;  
Community Members Urged to Resume Preventative Health Care**

For Immediate Release

**(COLUMBUS, Neb.)** – Columbus Community Hospital is now offering many programs and services that were put on hold due to COVID-19. Elective surgeries and screenings are now available, and all of the hospital's clinics are once again seeing patients.

As it reopens services, CCH will continue to maintain the following COVID-19 safety precautions:

- Everyone who visits the hospital will be given a mask and be required to wear it
- All CCH staff members will wear a mask as part of the hospital's universal mask policy
- Increased cleaning and disinfection will be done throughout the hospital
- Social distancing will be reinforced in all waiting areas
- Patients and visitors will be prescreened for COVID-19

Though CCH will maintain the above safety precautions, it is adjusting some other COVID-19 policies, including its visitor restrictions. Starting on Monday, July 6:

- One healthy support person is allowed per patient, but this has to be the same support person throughout the duration of the patient's stay.
- Clergy members may visit patients in the hospital. Please note that this updated policy only applies to official clergy members and not all representatives from a church.
- All visitors are encouraged to bring their own masks.

CCH will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in coming weeks and adjust its policies as necessary to protect the safety of its patients, visitors and staff.

**Resuming Preventative and Elective Health Care**

In many ways, life as we knew it came to a halt the last few months. Around the world, people have changed the way they socialize, work and shop. They've also changed the way they receive health care. To flatten the curve of COVID-19, some elective surgeries and procedures were put on hold, while other health care services moved to telehealth or another form of adjusted service.

Now that hospitals and health care systems, including CCH, are reopening, people are encouraged to resume their regular health care activities if they have avoided them during the pandemic. This includes checkups and wellness visits for children, teens and adults. Although national and state recommendations continue to encourage social distancing, it is safe to attend these visits and it is important to do so. Regularly-scheduled checkups give health care providers an opportunity to detect physical and mental health issues, help patients manage their chronic conditions, promote healthy



behaviors and answer any questions patients may have. Children’s checkups also provide an opportunity for physicians to monitor children’s growth and development, and update their vaccinations.

During Gov. Pete Ricketts’ press conference on June 25, state health officials encouraged parents to make sure their children were up-to-date on their vaccinations. Data has shown a decline in routine childhood vaccinations nationwide as families have stayed home to help slow the spread of the virus. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children should continue to receive their routine vaccinations during the coronavirus outbreak.

### **Local Cases and Available Resources**

As of Tuesday, June 30, there are no COVID-19 patients and/or persons of interest (PUIs) receiving inpatient care at CCH.

The East Central District Health Department, released the following numbers on COVID-19 cumulative cases and recoveries on Friday, June 26:

- Boone County: 7 cases and 7 recoveries
- Colfax County: 665 cases and 652 recoveries
- Nance County: 4 cases and 4 recoveries
- Platte Country: 659 cases and 645 recoveries

In this report, the ECDHD also noted that the 14-day totals and positivity rates for the health district continued to improve. This is as several other states have experienced a resurgence of cases as directed health measures are loosened across the country. With that in mind, local residents are encouraged to avoid travel to domestic COVID-19 hot spots, including Arizona, California, Florida and Texas.

### **Testing Opportunities**

As of July 2, CCH has collected 2,520 COVID-19 specimens with 1,819 of them being negative and 680 of them being positive. Twenty-one specimens are still pending.

In June, CCH became a permanent Test Nebraska collection site for COVID-19. People who are having symptoms of COVID-19 and would like to be tested through Test Nebraska, must register online at <https://www.testnebraska.com/en>.

According to the CDC, people with COVID-19 may have a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat



- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

After registering through Test Nebraska, people will receive a QR code and be assigned a testing appointment at CCH. Appointments will be available on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. throughout July. The test will take place at CCH's existing outdoor testing site and sample collection takes no more than five minutes.

Gov. Ricketts launched the Test Nebraska initiative in April. The initiative is a partnership between the state government and private companies to increase access to COVID-19 testing and reduce the spread of the virus. For more information on Test Nebraska, visit <https://www.testnebraska.com/en>.

### **Masks: An Important Public Safety Tool**

Wearing a cloth face covering or mask is not a substitute for social distancing, but it is an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. According to the CDC, COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets which are produced when people cough, sneeze or talk. Research has shown that these droplets usually travel about 6 feet. They can then enter the mouths or noses of people nearby or be inhaled into the lungs. When used in conjunction with social distancing, masks are an extra layer of protection that trap these respiratory droplets and prevent them from traveling into the air and onto other people.

Though masks may not protect the person wearing them, they can keep the mask wearer from spreading COVID-19 to others. This is especially important because, in many cases, people can spread COVID-19 before they develop symptoms.

The CDC recommends people older than 2 years old wear masks or cloth face coverings in public, especially in places where social distancing is hard to enforce such as in pharmacies, grocery stores and at gas stations. Masks can be made from household materials such as t-shirts and towels. For instructions on how to make masks as well as the most up-to-date mask guidelines from the CDC, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

### **Returning to Activities**

The CDC is offering new guidance on how people can safely resume their activities as communities across the nation reopen. Before people resume any activity, the CDC urges them to understand its potential risk.

To determine that risk, the CDC recommends people ask themselves the following questions:

- **How many people will you interact with?** Interacting with more people raises your risk.
- **Can you keep 6 feet of space between you and others?** The closer you are to other people who may be infected, the greater your risk of getting sick.
- **Will you be outdoors or indoors?** Indoor spaces are more risky than outdoor spaces where it might be harder to keep people apart and there's less ventilation.



- **What's the length of time that you will be interacting with people?** Spending more time with people who may be infected increases your risk of becoming infected yourself.
- **Is COVID-19 spreading in my community?** Visit the ECDHD website <https://ecdhd.ne.gov/> to stay up to date with the latest statistics:
- **What are the local orders in my community?** Visit the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services website <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/default.aspx> to learn about the latest directed health measures.
- **Am I at risk for severe illness?** Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. While the risk for severe illness is lower for others, everyone faces some risk of illness. Some people have no symptoms, others have mild symptoms, and some get severely ill.
- **Do I live with someone who is at risk for severe illness?** If you live with older adults or someone with certain underlying medical conditions, then you and all family members should take extra precautions to minimize risk.
- **Will I have to share any items, equipment, or tools with other people?** Choose places where there is limited sharing of items and where any items that are shared are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between uses.

If people do decide to participate in activities in the public, they should keep the following items on hand: a cloth face covering or mask, tissues and a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. They should also follow the recommended safety measures from the CDC: stay six feet away from others, wash their hands often, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, monitor their health daily, and wear a cloth face covering in public.

People who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who have in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 should stay home and away from other people.

#### **Additional Resources**

For more information on COVID-19, how you can reduce its spread or how CCH is handling the situation, visit the "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information and Resources for Community Members" page at [www.columbushosp.org](http://www.columbushosp.org).

The ECDHD COVID-19 information line at 402-562-8960 is also available or call the DHHS COVID-19 Information Line at 402-552-6645.

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