



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Callaway County COVID Update – November 23, 2020

Throughout this past year, we have learned a lot about contact tracing/tracking for COVID-19. Here at the Callaway County Health Department, we have observed that:

- It can take five to seven days before the local health department receives the positive test results;
- not all lab results have the correct personal contact information for the individual tested;
- many people avoid answering the phone perhaps because they do not recognize the number calling them, and/or do not give complete factual information.
- The increase in cases makes it very difficult to determine exactly where someone was exposed to COVID-19.

As you are well aware, cases of COVID-19 are and have been increasing nationwide. The state of Missouri and Callaway County have also seen positive case numbers increasing. This increase has made it very difficult for many city and county health departments to keep up with the contact tracing/tracking. The Callaway County Health Department is fortunate to have had additional staff funded by the CARES Act, however cases continue to rise.

It is now imperative to get beyond the barriers of traditional contact tracing. After much deliberation, we have decided to adopt a new approach to contract tracing. This new method should expedite the process by allowing positive cases to notify their close contacts as soon as they receive positive lab results.

This new strategy will prevent patients from having to wait for instructions or information. They will be able to take appropriate actions immediately without waiting for a phone call from the Callaway County Health Department. At the time of testing, patients will be instructed as to what to do while they wait for their results to arrive.

We have had numerous people call to tell us they tested positive and need to know what to do. Now, individuals will receive these instructions at the time of testing and/or these instructions will be mailed to them once we are notified of that have a positive test result from the health department. Individuals will no longer need to wait for a call from the Callaway Public Health Department; they will know exactly what to do.

Each positive case will be expected to notify their close contacts. This will eliminate the wait time and help stop people from unknowingly spreading the virus. It is our hope that people will feel more comfortable telling their contacts about their positive results versus a stranger on the phone. Cases that require additional documentation for employers will need to contact their health care provider. The reason for this change is that a health care provider will need to answer medical questions and questions regarding the severity of Covid-19 symptoms.

Along with other health departments across the state, Callaway County Health Department will continue to assist those places where outbreaks are more likely to occurs, such as: businesses, residential care facilities and schools. As long as it is available, CARES Act funding will continue to be used to assist with providing contact-tracing services to the schools as needed.

Educational information will be provided on the Callaway County COVID website and our staff at the health department will be available for consultation as well.

This new guidance, in addition to guidance from the CDC about quarantine (14 days from last exposure to positive) and isolation (10 days from symptom onset or positive test date if no symptoms), will be on the Callaway County COVID website <https://callawaycovid19.com/>. Please note that the number of new cases per day will still be shown on the website.

Beginning Tuesday, November 17th, if you are tested at any site in Callaway County, you will be given an educational handout. If you receive a call from your doctor with a positive result, you need to take immediate action to slow the spread of the virus within your friends, family and coworkers by following the outlined steps on the educational handout. Please do not wait for a phone call from the health department to follow the steps outlined on the handout.

Please keep in mind you will need to notify everyone with whom you have had close contact. A close contact is anyone that you were within 6 feet of for more than 15 combined minutes starting 48 hours prior to becoming symptomatic, regardless of cloth face coverings. If you had to do that today, how many people would that be?

Please take action now to reduce that number on a daily basis. Keeping your distance from those outside of your household is important in limiting the spread of COVID-19

The Callaway County Health Department has observed clusters of positive cases at office buildings, correctional facilities, and long-term care facilities. We have also seen positive cases emerging from social gatherings where physical distancing is not easily maintained.

We urge everyone to continue to take responsibility for their own health and to protect others. Please reconsider hosting or attending gatherings that bring together people that are outside of your normal interactions, especially if physical distancing cannot be maintained. These activities are high risk for transmission of the virus. Please adhere to physical distancing recommendations and limit contact with others outside of your household.

In addition to limiting social interactions, the Callaway County Health Department strongly recommends that everyone take precautionary measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Do not be within six feet of others outside of your household for more than 15 minutes combined.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating. If hand washing is not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Face coverings are recommended to be worn when in contact with someone outside of your household within six (6) feet for more than 15 minutes. (Note) Cloth face coverings offer some degree of protection against large infectious droplets, such as mucus or saliva, when speaking, sneezing, or coughing. This particularly protects those around the person wearing the face covering who may unknowingly be infectious from spreading it to others.

Cloth face coverings are not considered an acceptable substitute for physical distancing. Interactions within six feet of a positive case for more than fifteen minutes will be considered exposure regardless if either person is wearing a cloth face covering.

Cloth face coverings should be washed after each use. Cloth face coverings should be replaced frequently as consistent washing will degrade the fabric and decrease the effectiveness.

As the situation regarding the pandemic changes, the Callaway County Health Department will post additional information at <https://callawaycovid19.com/> If you have questions please consult a factual source, such as <http://www.CDC.gov> or www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus . The community can also call the Missouri Department of Health hotline at (877) 435-8411 to address questions or concerns related to COVID-19. The hotline is available from 7am to 7pm 7 days/week.

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