

March 18, 2020
4:00 PM
Big Horn County
COVID-19 Update/Response

For Immediate Release

Currently Big Horn County is activating an emergency operation center for the COVID-19 virus. What that means to the public is the following: We are centrally organizing our response for healthcare professionals and facilities, first responders of all disciplines, and government responses including local county and state.

A COVID-19 tab has been added to the Big Horn County website.

<https://www.bighorncountyywy.gov/#covid-19>

We encourage everyone to access this page often for the most up to date information from Big Horn County. This page will include daily updates that will be posted by 2:00 PM or sooner. This site will also include links for vital services and information including CDC recommendations. Our goal is to provide accurate information to citizens as quickly as possible to enable them to make wise and informed decisions.

We know the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is in Wyoming and is getting nearer to Big Horn County with a confirmed case in Park County. With that said, this is a time for caution, common sense, and calm.

Big Horn County Public Health Officer Dr. David Fairbanks and the Big Horn County Public Health staff are doing a fantastic job of obtaining the latest accurate information and providing it in real time. That information will be disseminated through the website listed above by the Big Horn County Public Information Officers as it is provided by Dr. Fairbanks.

We are currently expecting a determination from the Wyoming Department of Health, Governor's Office and Attorney General's office that will take us to a more restrictive response further isolating and protecting our citizens. Current recommendations include: Avoid gatherings of more than 10 individuals; practice social distancing from others at distances greater than 6 feet, washing your hands regularly with soap and water, disinfecting all commonly used surfaces regularly, and stay home if you are sick. The virus outside of the human body is rather weak if we practice good hygiene.

A local hotline will be established soon that will be available for any questions or concerns. As soon as that line is operational that number will be posted on the website listed above.

"Tough times never last but tough people do." (artist- Jim Rey)

David Weston, Fairbanks, MD, FAAFP
Big Horn County Health Officer



Additional Information and Advice From Dr. Fairbanks

We have to be calm:

Panic is not helpful. It increases stress which impairs the immune system.

How can I mitigate this risk?

Shopping for paper products and canned food may give you a sense of control over the situation, however, it is NOT as productive as the following:

- a. Social distancing, hand washing and other prevention techniques.
- b. Avoid large gatherings.
- c. Stay home if you are sick.
- d. Get immunized against influenza, while not affording direct COVID-19 protection, flu shots provide three-fold indirect protection.
 - 1) Influenza immunization lowers the number of health facility visits, lessening the chance of exposure to COVID-19 patients.
 - 2) COVID-19 recovery rates are improved if the patient's health is not degraded by the simultaneous presence of flu.
 - 3) If the presence of flu can rapidly be ruled out, a more aggressive treatment of COVID-19 can be achieved.

What is the risk I will become seriously ill if I get the virus?

Very low, unless you have other respiratory illnesses or are elderly.

Most people will not become seriously ill.

Most people will not be hospitalized.

NIH says 80% will have mild illness and only 15-20% will require medical care.

How can I avoid the risk of serious illness?

- a. Social distancing, hand washing and other prevention techniques.
- b. Avoid large gatherings.
- c. Stay home if you are sick.
- d. Get immunized against influenza

What is the risk that I will die?

A lot higher in a motor vehicle accident.

The fatality rate is <2% and probably closer to 0.7%, as we heard in the President's briefing, mostly among those frail and ill in nursing homes and hospitals.

For Sources of Information on COVID-19:

1. Big Horn County Public Health Website:
<https://www.bighorncountyyw.gov/departments/public-health>
2. Park County Public Health Coronavirus Information Line: 754-1870 or 527-1870
(Updated regularly). Big Horn County may use this.
3. Up to date announcements from Wyoming Department of Health as they are released Wyoming Department of Health
Website: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus>.

CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>