

**Public Health Advisory for Central District Health's Jurisdiction:
Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties**
Issued February 19, 2021

This advisory is a set of strong recommendations to the communities served by Central District Health (CDH) with actions to take to help reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. **It is not a public health order and does not replace or supersede orders in place or enacted by a city, county, state or federal government.** This advisory is issued by the District Director of CDH, not by the CDH Board of Health, and is a replacement for the COVID-19 advisory issued on November 17, 2020. It is subject to change based on changing circumstances with the pandemic.

Background

COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is a serious and sometimes deadly illness. CDH's goal from the start of the pandemic has been to protect our community members who are most likely to experience severe health outcomes from COVID-19 and to keep our hospitals from getting overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients.

While many people infected with COVID-19 recover, and some have no symptoms at all, a certain number of people will end up with severe illness and require hospital care, and sadly, some will die. This is not isolated to just the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, although they are the most likely to experience severe outcomes.

The most vulnerable members of our community aged 65 years and older became eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccine starting February 1, 2021. However, the supply of vaccine is such that it will take several weeks for all those who can and want to receive the vaccine to get both doses required to achieve the highest level of protection. Two factors that will influence the timeline are the amount of vaccine our district receives weekly and uptake rates (i.e. the number of people who choose to get vaccinated).

Impacts on our most vulnerable community members

The members of our community who are at the greatest risk for severe COVID-19 are individuals who are aged 65 years and older and this risk will likely remain unchanged for those who are not vaccinated. According to CDH data for our population, if a person is between 65 and 79 years of age and is a confirmed or probable case, their chances of needing hospitalization due to their illness are 1 in 10 (10.7%) and 1 in 30 (3.5%) will die due to their illness (i.e., COVID-19 is the cause of death or ruled a significant contributing factor). If a person is aged 80 years or older that risk is

further increased with their chances of needing hospitalization due to their illness being nearly 1 in 5 (18.6%) and nearly 1 in 6 (15.2%) will die due to their illness.

Top exposure sources

From our disease investigations, two of the most likely sources of exposure are through the workplace and social gatherings. Specifically, workplace exposures are occurring primarily through exposure to infectious co-workers. Common scenarios of transmission include participating in formal and informal meetings, eating lunch together, and traveling together in vehicles. Inconsistent use of face coverings is commonly reported. Social network exposures are occurring at gatherings such as dinners and birthday parties, especially among non-household extended families.

COVID-19 current status

In recent weeks, we have seen a steady decline in confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in our district and a corresponding decline in hospitalizations. While we are seeing encouraging data, variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been identified in the United States, and the impact these may have on our efforts to control the pandemic are unknown at this time. It is impossible to predict future waves or changes to the virus that could influence how infectious it is as well as the severity of the disease.

CDH is updating the public health advisory issued on November 17, 2020, with the following strong recommendations to its entire jurisdiction, which includes Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties.

1. **Wear a face covering** that completely covers both the nose and mouth at all times around anyone who is not a member of your household when physical distancing of at least six-feet cannot be maintained.
2. For the purposes of this advisory, "face covering" includes but is not limited to paper or disposable masks, cloth masks, religious face coverings, scarves, neck gaiters, or bandannas. Any mask that incorporates a valve or vent or contains openings, holes, or visible gaps is not acceptable.
3. Face coverings do not need to be worn under the following circumstances:
 - a. Children under the age of two (2).
 - b. Persons with medical conditions, mental health conditions, or disability that prevent them from wearing a face covering.
 - c. Persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, or communicating with a person who is deaf and hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
 - d. Persons, including on-duty first responders, for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
 - e. Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose, face, or head for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.

- f. Persons who are eating or drinking at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, so long as they engage in physical distancing. This exemption does NOT apply to entry, exit, or movement throughout the facility.
 - g. Persons actively engaged in athletic competition, training, or practice when wearing a face covering is not feasible.
4. **Avoid indoor social gatherings**, including among family members who do not live in your household. If you are going to participate in social gatherings, limit the size of the gathering, consider using outdoor venues whenever possible, keep your distance, and wear a face covering.
 5. **Avoid large indoor gatherings of any type with greater than 50 people present.** Fewer than 50 people does not make a gathering safe from COVID-19, but it does reduce the number of people who are exposed if someone attending the gathering is infectious and therefore reduces the overall level of infection in our communities. Stay at least six-feet away from individuals not residing within the same household.
 6. When engaging in **any sporting/community/extra-curricular activities** keep as much distance as possible between participants and wear face coverings when feasible, as these settings remain a high risk for transmission when these two precautions are not taken.
 7. **Workplaces implement practices** to ensure staff can maintain a distance of six feet from others and require face coverings be worn when staff are within six feet of others and when staff are outside of their office space. Offer sick leave policies that encourage staff to stay home if they are exhibiting COVID-like symptoms. Allow for working remotely. Hold meetings virtually whenever able including for staff who are in the workplace rather than meeting in places like personal offices and conference rooms. Implement cleaning and disinfecting processes for common areas and high-touch points. Provide services while limiting close interactions with patrons. For stationary areas with frequent customer contact, place physical barriers such as plexiglass between the employee and the public with openings only large enough for transactions to take place.
 8. **Get the COVID-19 vaccine** whenever it is your turn to get it. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective; it will lessen the individual health impacts from SARS-CoV-2, and reduce transmission in our communities.

Duration of Advisory

This advisory will remain in effect until our 65 years and older population has had the opportunity to receive both doses of COVID-19 vaccine, plus two weeks to ensure they receive the best protection, AND our two-week average daily case rate remains less than 30 cases per 100,000 population.

If any of our three major health systems report to the state that they are functioning under severe constraints because of COVID-19 patient volume, the board of health **may** consider public health orders to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

The face covering and physical distancing recommendation will remain in effect until the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention directs that other pandemic control measures allow discontinuation of these measures.