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Horizon Public Health PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Horizon Public Health is working closely with the Minnesota Department of Health and local partners to ensure the public clearly understands the actions they should take to respond to the COVID-19 situation. "The public needs to understand that information regarding COVID-19 is changing very quickly," Horizon Public Health Administrator Ann Stehn said.

Horizon Public Health (HPH) is assisting at the local level to implement COVID-19 guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Minnesota is implementing community mitigation and social distancing efforts that are intended to slow the spread of the virus. Schools, restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and many others are working to adapt quickly to meet the requirements set by the Governor's Executive Orders. There is likely no one that has not felt the impact of these changes.

"We appreciate everything our communities are doing to be vigilant to help protect everyone during these uncertain times," said Stehn. On March 17th new guidelines were released by MDH on testing criteria in Minnesota due to a national shortage of COVID-19 laboratory testing materials. The state will be focusing on testing the highest priority, including hospitalized patients, health care workers and those in long-term care facilities. Community transmission has been identified in Minnesota and with the current limits of testing, people need to recognize that they will not be able to make decisions based on numbers of cases and where the cases are located.

Key messages from Horizon Public Health are:

- If you have respiratory symptoms, stay home and isolate yourself from household contacts. Seek care by calling your health care provider first when possible. Stay home for at least 7 days after illness onset and/or 72 hours fever-free (without taking fever reducing medication) whichever is longer.
- If you are a household member or have been in intimate contact with people who have symptoms you should limit your activities in public and monitor symptoms for 14 days after incorporating precautions at home.
- Everyone should be working to social distance (at least 6 feet). Give people room at the grocery store, at work and in other environments.
- Be aware that there have been reports of people trying to take advantage of the situation. Be wary of emails that claim to be from your health department. Horizon is NOT contacting people with positive tests or their contacts using email.

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- Many in our communities are stepping up to help. If you need help or supports make sure you seek it from a trusted source. If you are someone wanting to help, start with people you know, neighbors, and family members.

COVID-19 is rapidly evolving and guidance is subject to change at the local, state and federal level. Epidemiologists are learning about this disease in real time as they study what has happened in other parts of the world, the United States and Minnesota. The data is used to help develop recommendations. “We strongly encourage the public to follow the guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health. We can all do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19 and help our healthcare system handle the demand for care,” said Stehn.

Horizon Public Health recommends the public use the CDC and MDH websites for the most current information as they are updated on a frequent basis. Visit them at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [health.state.mn.us](https://www.health.state.mn.us). The Minnesota Department of Health hotline for public questions is 1-800-657-3903. Visit Horizon Public Health at [horizonpublichealth.org](https://www.horizonpublichealth.org). Keep washing your hands!