



Community letter from Johnson County Government about the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 8, 2020

Dear Johnson County community,

Now that a Johnson County resident is the first person in the state, and the Kansas City Metro, to have a positive case of COVID-19 awaiting confirmatory testing from the CDC, you may be feeling more anxious or concerned about this virus. As we wish for the individual's speedy recovery, we want to assure the community that the individual has been isolated appropriately. The current risk in Johnson County for contracting COVID-19 is low. The people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness are older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions.

Protecting the health and well-being of our community and our workforce is a priority. We have experience with other public health incidents and are well-prepared to handle this one. Several of our departments are coordinating the county's preparedness, response plans and communication efforts including the Department of Health and Environment, Emergency Management and Communications, MED-ACT, the Sheriff's Office, Human Resources and others. This task force is closely monitoring the situation and collaborating our preparedness efforts on behalf of our 600,000 residents and 4,000 employees.

We are also closely working with partners in our community. Johnson County is hosting a weekly webinar with representatives from emergency first responders, city emergency management teams, schools, hospitals, fire services and law enforcement, and are in coordination with partners on both sides of the state line. Looking at preparedness and planning from a metro-wide perspective is key.

There are several things you can do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Seek appropriate levels of medical care and personal preparedness.

The latest data indicates that 80 percent of people who contract COVID-19 will experience mild, cold-like symptoms. If you are having mild symptoms and want to seek medical treatment, we encourage you to call your regular doctor for guidance, as you would for a typical flu-like illness. Those experiencing mild symptoms only should avoid visiting the Emergency Department or calling 911 in order to save those resources for those who are having severe illness and other emergencies.

There is no need to wear surgical or N95 masks if you are without symptoms. Surgical masks (simple mask) are only to be worn by people who are coughing and very ill— this mask is meant to stop cough droplets and prevent infection to others. An N95 (a respirator) mask is meant for medical workers, first responders and caregivers of the very ill and not for public use. Again, please save those resources where they are most needed.

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Follow good hygiene.

You can help prevent the spread of any type of flu, virus or illness by taking actions such as:

- Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough with a tissue or your sleeve and then wash your hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.
- You might consider alternatives to shaking hands.

Stay informed from trusted information sources.

We encourage you to get your information from [Johnson County Government](#), [the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment](#), [the Kansas Department of Health and Environment](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). You can also follow those organizations on social media.

We will continue to work with our internal and external partners to provide you with the latest information on our preparedness efforts and guidance on the role you can play to support a healthy community.

Thank you,

Penny Postoak Ferguson, County Manager

Mary Beverly, Interim Director of Johnson County Department of Health and Environment

Ryan C. Jacobsen, MD, Johnson County EMS System Medical Director