Covid Q&A
with Your Local Health Department

1. How do I prevent myself from getting Covid-19?

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

- You are safest at home.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- Wear a facemask when in public or a closed space with others not from your own household. Launder cloth masks regularly.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Keep six feet between yourself and others.
- If you are getting together in groups, it is much safer to limit the size to 10 people from two households than getting together with large groups from many households.

2. What protection does wearing a mask offer?

While keeping socially distant is our best line of defense against catching and spreading Covid-19, **wearing a mask is essential and required in an indoor public space or a crowded outdoor space.** Wearing a mask properly, by covering the nose and mouth, can help reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19 by about 70%.

Wearing a mask protects others from you by keeping more of your droplets with you. A mask also adds an extra layer of protection between you and other people's droplets. It is important to note that masks should not be adjusted while worn. This increases the risk of contamination.
Source: https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202004.0203/v2
Source: https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/5/e002794

3. Where do I get a Covid-19 test?

View the tri-county testing site document at http://bhsj.org/resources?cat=32. BHSJCHA recommends anyone with symptoms, or working outside the home during the pandemic, or has been exposed to a known positive case, be tested.

4. In what circumstances should I quarantine?

View the attached flowcharts from MDHHS (also at http://bhsj.org/resources?cat=32) for information on what to do if you think you were exposed and when it is safe to leave home.

If you test positive, you will need to quarantine a minimum of 10 days past the onset of symptoms, PLUS have 3 fever free days (without the help of fever-reducing medication), PLUS have a significant improvement in symptoms. If you are a positive person who is asymptomatic, you need to quarantine for 10 days past the day you were tested.

Someone who has an exposure to a positive case will need to quarantine for 14 days past the very last exposure, even if they have tested negative within those 14 days. In many instances, the person who is in quarantine for an exposure may end up in quarantine longer than the person who originally tested positive because we are waiting out the 14 day incubation period to see if the person will become infected.

5. Who can I call for a medical Covid related question?

BHSJCHA has a Covid helpline available. Call 269-273-2161, option #7. Questions are answered Mon-Fri, 8am to 4pm.

The MDHHS Hotline is available seven days a week from 8am to 4pm by calling 1-888-535-6136.

Please note: The local and state call center's staff cannot provide individual clinical advice or a diagnosis through the hotline. If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19 and are symptomatic, call your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call the nearest hospital.

6. If a person tests positive for Covid-19 multiple times, are they counted as a new case each time?

No. Each positive person is only counted once. If a person tests positive again, the information is merged into their existing case. People can test anywhere in the US and the results will come back and be counted in the county in which they live.

7. Positive cases are increasing. Is this because more people are being tested? What percentage of cases are asymptomatic and why does this matter?

Positive cases are increasing because there are more tests available and there is also more community spread in our area right now making more people ill.

Approximately 50 percent of the positive cases tested in our area have been asymptomatic which means they do not have symptoms and can spread the virus unknowingly to others. Many people we have interviewed don't realize that what they are feeling may be symptoms. For example, many have stated they just thought their allergies were acting up. Symptoms do not have to be severe. It is important to note you do not have to have a fever to be contagious.

8. How does the Health Department notify the public of exposure?

To adhere to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability And Accountability Act) rules for privacy, as testing reports come to the Health Department, staff notifies that person and provides information about what they need to do to stop spreading the virus any further. These individuals are informed of their obligation to isolate and asked about their close contacts. Our staff then ensures that close contacts are notified about quarantine and what they need to do; watch for symptoms, seek testing if they note any symptoms.

Employers and other sources are notified when positive cases are found. We work directly with places of employment when a worker tests positive to ensure that any close contacts of that worker are off work and in quarantine and that the workplace is disinfected.

In general, we are able to find out who was at locations and notify the people. If there is a location where we feel there was transmission and we don't know how to get ahold of people, then we will send out a press release to the media, post to our website, and Facebook page.

9. To whom do I submit a complaint if an establishment is not wearing masks?

Call your local health department with complaints regarding restaurants (choose option #2 in the phone directory).

If you are a patron with concerns about a salon, gas station, medical office, store, etc., notify management at the business first and if management fails to respond appropriately, contact the health department or MIOSHA.

MIOSHA has set up a workplace safety hotline. If you are an employee concerned your employer is failing to take the proper precautions in the workplace to protect employees from exposure to COVID-19, you can call 855 SAFE C19 (855 723-3219) and/or file a complaint with MIOSHA. Employee complaints are generally placed via an online form at www.michigan.gov/MIOSHAcomplaint. You may request your name be kept confidential from the employer when you file a complaint. MIOSHA will not pursue anonymous complaints.

10. How many people have recovered from Covid-19 in our county?

The Michigan.gov/coronavirus "See Cumulative Data" page assumes recovered case numbers based on cases who are alive 30 days post onset of symptoms. BHSJCHA does not track this number, because it is an assumed number, and some patients are still sick or pass away past the 30 day mark.

11. Why does BHSJCHA not post more Covid-19 data for our county?

BHSJCHA posts Covid-19 pandemic data to its website much the same way as it posts data for other communicable diseases with daily reports of new cases, deaths, and total case counts for Branch, Hillsdale and St Joseph counties. This is consistent with many other counties' health departments' reports. Enhanced data is available through the State of Michigan at the michigan.gov/coronavirus website. BHSJCHA has also added a weekly report at bhsj.org/events/223 that includes gender, age, race, and zip code data.

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