



# Southeastern Idaho Public Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Health Officials Continue to Monitor COVID-19**

With the first case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) identified in Idaho, and with the spread continuing to increase throughout the world and in the United States, Southeastern Idaho Public Health (SIPH) is monitoring and preparing for a case in southeast Idaho by working closely with local healthcare professionals and Emergency Managers.

To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 in southeast Idaho. Currently, 1,629 confirmed cases and 41 deaths have occurred in the United States. To slow the progression of COVID-19, it is very important that everyone do their part to respond to this emerging public health threat:

- Take everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs such as washing your hands frequently, avoiding touching your face when out in public, trying to keep a distance of at least 6 feet from people who appear to have respiratory illness, covering your cough or sneeze, and staying home when you are sick.
- Be aware that there are other viruses that cause respiratory disease. These are not the same virus that causes COVID-19.
- Follow public health travel recommendations to avoid unnecessary risk; these are available on the CDC website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
- If you or someone you know may have been exposed to the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, call your medical provider to determine next steps.

It is still cold and flu season, and you do not need to seek medical attention for a mild respiratory illness such as a cold. However, if you have had close contact with a person with known COVID-19 or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread and you develop fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider and ask for instructions about how to seek care. They may order appropriate testing, and samples will be sent to the state lab or to a private lab as needed.

At this time, SIPH does not recommend testing of people who do not have all symptoms. Because of the limited number of tests across the nation, there is a need to preserve them for the sickest and those with the highest risk of complications from an infection.

People that are at a higher risk than others of getting very sick from COVID-19 are older adults (60+) and people who have chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease. If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health condition, it is extremely important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

While many people want testing, not everyone who is sick needs to be tested, particularly when experiencing a mild illness. If people aren't severely ill, they should follow the guidance for self-care.

- They should stay home, stay away from others, and self-isolate.
- Do not go to the emergency room. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- Do not call 911 unless it is a life-threatening emergency.

In addition, to protect people at high risk, long-term care facilities should discourage visitation and recommend alternative, non-face-to-face means (skype, face-time, etc.) of communication with residents. Facilities that are concerned that a resident, visitor, or employee may be a sick with COVID-19 should contact Southeastern Idaho Public Health at 208-233-9080. Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, SIPH will support any decision made by a venue or event manager to postpone or cancel mass gatherings and public events. Guidance is posted in full at [coronavirus.idaho.gov](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov).

SIPH recommends postponing or canceling mass gatherings and public events in any of the following situations:

- The event will draw audiences or participants from communities, states, or countries with confirmed community spread of COVID-19 disease. SIPH can assist you in making this determination.
- The event will be held indoors and bring together more than 250 individuals where social distancing of 6 feet or more is unlikely or not possible.
- The event's primary audience includes or may expose high-risk populations, including adults over the age of 60 years and people with underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes, regardless of the number of attendees.

Local school boards and school officials in conjunction with public health officials will make the decision about closing the schools.

Businesses will determine how they will manage sick leave or whether they will allow employees to work from home. Businesses can contact Southeastern Idaho Public Health for public health recommendations.

For more information and guidance on COVID-19, visit [siphidaho.org](https://siphidaho.org), [coronavirus.idaho.gov](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov), [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov) or call SIPH's call center Monday-Friday from 8 am-5 pm at **208-234-5875**.