FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **Contact: Tracy McCulloch**
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Caring for Someone with COVID-19

With COVID-19 being a new virus and highly contagious, it's important to know how to protect yourself and others if you are sick or taking care of someone who is sick.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), most people who get sick with COVID-19 have mild illness and are able to recover at home, though those at higher risk — including older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions, such as heart, lung and liver disease, or have a weakened immune system — should call a health care provider as soon as symptoms start. "Mild or severe, however, any case of COVID-19 needs to be taken seriously to prevent its further spread, both within a household and to others in the community," says Maggie Mann, Southeastern Idaho Public Health District Director.

The key to treating someone with COVID-19 at home is separating the patient from others. Ideally, the sick person should at least be in a separate bedroom and use only dedicated bathroom facilities. (If a separate bathroom is not available, it should be thoroughly cleaned each time the person who is sick uses it.

Following these recommendations from the CDC can help protect the person caring for a patient with COVID-19 from falling sick themselves.

- **Wear a mask.** Sick people should use a mask when they can't avoid being in the same room as others. Anyone caring for a sick household member directly should also wear a mask.

- **Wear gloves.** Disposable medical gloves are recommended for tending to a patient, cleaning in the isolation room, and collecting things like tissues, eating utensils, and linens that could be carrying the virus. Disposable gloves should be thrown away after each visit to the isolation room. (Wash your hands thoroughly after removing.)

- **Wash hands frequently with soap and water.** This is true even if you are using gloves and especially every time you leave the isolation room.

- **Avoid sharing household items**, such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items. After the person who is ill uses these items, wash them thoroughly. If laundry is soiled, wear disposable gloves and keep the soiled items away from your body while laundering. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.

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- **Clean and disinfect** all surfaces daily and high-touch surfaces frequently throughout the day in areas other than the sick room and designated bathroom, which should be cleaned by the person who is ill.

- **Care for pets in the home.** As a precaution, pets should also be kept away from the patient. If no one else can care for your pet while you are sick, you should wash your hands before and after you interact with your animal and wear a facemask or cloth face covering.

- **Wash and dry laundry.** Wash items according to the label instruction and use the warmest setting you can. Completely dry laundry on hot if possible.

- **Use a lined trash can.** Place all used disposable gloves, facemasks and other contaminated items in a lined trash can. If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick.

"Because those living in a household with someone known or suspected to have COVID-19 are at a high risk for contracting the virus themselves, everyone in the house should isolate themselves from other members of their community," said Mann. "These measures can help stop further spread of COVID-19."

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

After isolation, continue to follow CDC guidance to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Physical Distancing of 6 ft.
- Wear a cloth face covering in public places.
- Stay home if sick.
- Practice good hand hygiene.
- Cover cough and sneezes.
- Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly.

For Idaho-specific information about the novel coronavirus, please visit https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/. For southeast Idaho information, please visit siphidaho.org or join us Monday-Friday at 11 am for Facebook Live.