COVID-19 Numbers Trending up in Wyandotte County

Health Officials reiterate importance of safety measures; warn of possible delay in reopening Phases

The Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) announced today that they are seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases in Wyandotte County.

Elizabeth Groenweghe, Chief Epidemiologist with the UGPHD, spoke to the troubling rise in COVID-19 case data in Wyandotte County.

“Before we went into Phase 3 of reopening on June 8, our rolling averages of positive cases had begun to stabilize, and we hoped to see those numbers start going down. However, over the past week, we have seen those averages start to go up, which is concerning,” Groenweghe continued.

Data like the 7-day rolling average, case counts, and outbreak information is available to the public on the Unified Government’s COVID-19 Hub. To view this information, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19 and click on the “COVID-19 Hub” button. Data is updated daily.
Based on this data, Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer with the UGPHD, explained what he believes is the reason for this increase, and what this means for reopening.

“We think people are seeing more places reopening and are so eager to get back to a sense of normalcy, that they are starting to relax on safety measures,” said Dr. Greiner. “We understand that being under public health restrictions has been difficult for everyone, but COVID-19 is still very much a threat to our community. It is still vitally important that we all take steps like wearing cloth face coverings when in public, practicing social distancing, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands frequently. We are also counting on area businesses to ensure that appropriate precautions are in place to protect their workers and customers.”

“At this point, we are set to stay in Phase 3 of reopening until at least June 22. If we continue to see our numbers going up, we will likely have to stay in Phase 3 for a while longer.” Dr. Greiner added, “If we see a large enough spike, we will, unfortunately, have to consider going back to a more restrictive phase.”

The UGPHD wants to reiterate the importance of the following precautions to our local businesses and community members:

**What Businesses Can Do**
Most businesses can reopen at some capacity during Phase 3, and it is the responsibility of those businesses to keep their employees and visitors as safe as possible from COVID-19. Businesses need to:

- Ensure social distancing (at least six feet) between individuals and groups who do not share a household. This may include steps such as installing partitions between patrons or employees, modifying employee work areas or work schedules, or marking spots on the floor six feet apart where people will be waiting in line.
- Ask that employees wear masks or cloth face coverings and encourage customers to do the same.
- Educate employees on how to properly wear a mask (ensuring it covers both the nose and mouth at all times – see below for more details).

If employees become sick, especially with COVID-19 symptoms, they should stay home except to get tested for COVID-19 at a local testing site.

Businesses can learn more in the Wyandotte County COVID-19 Business Toolkit, available at [wycokck.org/COVID-19](http://wycokck.org/COVID-19). They can also get business-related COVID-19 questions answered by calling 3-1-1.

**Wearing Masks or Cloth Face Coverings**
The UGPHD strongly recommends that anyone over the age of two wear a cloth face covering while in public. UGPHD staff offer the following tips about masks and cloth face coverings:

- It is important to wear a mask or cloth face covering appropriately. This means that it must cover both your mouth and nose.
- Do your best to not touch your mask or your face. If you need to adjust your mask, clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer before and after touching your mask.
- Cloth face coverings that you can make with items around your home are effective at helping reduce the spread of COVID-19. You do not need a surgical mask or other medical-grade mask, and it is best to reserve those supplies for healthcare workers.
- Learn about cloth face covering recommendations, including how to make your own mask at home, at [cdc.gov/COVID19](http://cdc.gov/COVID19)
- The primary purpose of mask is to protect others in case you may be carrying the virus, even if you don't have symptoms. If we all wear masks, we are all helping protect one another, and especially protect those most vulnerable to serious illness.
Remember: wearing a mask is **not** a substitute for social distancing. The combination of different safety precautions is how we can best stop the spread of COVID-19

**Social Distancing**
- Maintain a distance of at least six feet between yourself and anyone who does not live in your household
- You may need to modify aspects of your routine to do this, such as not carpooling with people outside of your household.
- Remember to also wear a mask or cloth face covering for additional protection, even when you are six feet apart.

**Social Gatherings**
- Under Phase 3, social gatherings are limited to no more than 45 people.
- In addition to keeping the number of people to no more than 45, social distancing of six feet or more should be maintained.

**If You Get Sick, or You Are Exposed to COVID-19, Get Tested!**
- You should get tested for COVID-19 if:
  - You develop any symptoms of COVID-19, such as:
    - Fever
    - Dry cough
    - Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
    - Headache
    - Chills
    - Muscle/body aches
    - Runny nose
    - Sore throat
    - Diarrhea
    - New loss of taste or smell
- You have been exposed to COVID-19 through close contact (within six feet for at least ten minutes) with someone who has tested positive or through association with a known outbreak

Testing is available for free to people who live or work in Wyandotte County at multiple community locations, including the UGPHD and a rotating weekly schedule of “pop-up” sites coordinated by the Wyandotte County Health Equity Task Force. Find the latest testing schedule and locations at [wycokck.org/COVID-19](http://wycokck.org/COVID-19) or by calling 3-1-1.

**Remember: You May Be Able to Spread the Virus Even without Symptoms**
Local Health Officials remind Wyandotte County residents that asymptomatic spread may be possible, and that safety precautions should be taken even if you do not have symptoms.

“Even if you don’t have symptoms right now, you may still be able to infect others,” said Dr. Erin Corriveau, Deputy Medical Officer with the UGPHD. “Recently, someone from the World Health Organization mistakenly said that asymptomatic spread is unlikely, then quickly retracted the statement because there is not adequate scientific evidence to support that claim. Unfortunately, this misinformation spread widely. We are still learning more about this virus every day, and we certainly don’t have the data to back up a claim that the virus doesn’t spread without symptoms. More importantly, we do see evidence that people who develop symptoms can be infectious up to two days before their symptoms start. This is why it is so important for everyone to wear masks and practice social distancing, even if they feel well.”
You can find additional data and resources on COVID-19 in Wyandotte County by going to wycokck.org/COVID-19 or by calling 3-1-1.

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