

FAQ's from Stillwater County Public Health

To help alleviate some concerns and questions regarding COVID 19 positive cases, as well as how contract tracing works, we have devised a FAQ sheet with answers.

How do "contact tracing" and the 14-day quarantine period relate to one another?

These are 2 separate things. "Contact Tracing" is what we do to find anyone that potentially had contact with a positive case (this is any communicable disease from Influenza, Whooping Cough, Chlamydia, and COVID.) When we identify a positive case, we have to provide contact tracing as a way to look back and identify someone that is potentially positive. Each individual disease has a set timeframe of when a person is most contagious and when disease is most likely to be spread. In the instance of COVID19 the disease is most easily spread in the 48 hours immediately prior to onset of symptoms. So, if Natasha develops symptoms on Monday and is tested with positive results, then we would look back 48 hours from the onset of symptoms to identify any other person that came into contact with Natasha and determine the threat of those other individuals contracting COVID19 from her. For example, Natasha is only home with her family and had no other interaction, her family would be identified as "Contacts." Natasha would have to explain what type of contact happened (were they within 6 feet of each other for prolonged periods of time. Or was there communal areas that were shared that were close enough for Natasha to spread this to others) so that public health would be able to positively identify the risk others for contracting the illness within the 48 hours prior to symptoms. These are then designated as High, Moderate, Low, or No Risk for transmission levels.

The 14 day quarantine period is how long a COVID19 positive person has to maintain physical separation from others, this can include those that were potentially exposed based on their exposure level. The 14 days start from the date the positive test was issued. This quarantine period may be extended if symptoms persist outside of the 14 days. If you are a contact with high risk for contraction of the virus, you are quarantined for 14 days from the last exposure with the positive patient, this however, will not mean you are positive.

Will wearing a mask keep me from contracting COVID-19?

Wearing a mask does not prevent you from contracting COVID19, however, it can help to prevent the unknown spread of the virus to others. As individuals are not becoming symptomatic for 48 hours, they still shed the virus. Wearing a mask prevents the spread of COVID19 by covering others from you if you possibly have COVID and have yet to develop symptoms. By wearing a mask, we are protecting others from what we might spread to them. We protect our spouses, kids, parents, neighbors and overall vulnerable population for unintentionally contracting the virus. This is the same as when you present to various hospitals and clinics now, staff wear a facemask to prevent the possible spread from healthcare workers to others.

Why isn't everyone who has any symptoms of COVID-19 being tested?

Not everyone that has symptoms are tested based on other considerations. If a person has influenza and the disease can be positively identified, then it would rule out the need for further testing. We also evaluate the symptoms, the history of the patient and where they were, if they were a contact to a

COVID19 positive patient. At this point, Stillwater Billings Clinic is still testing patients and will continue to test patients that are symptomatic.

My friend has COVID 19, does that mean I am going to be positive for COVID 19?

No, just because a friend has COVID 19 does not mean you have COVID 19. We look back at contacts that were in the 48 hours immediately prior to onset of symptoms. The nurse will call you and ask about your contact. Where were you in contact with the positive case? What were you doing when contact occurred? How long were you in contact with the positive case?

Once we determine the positive case, we will notify all the case contacts. If you don't hear from Public Health, you are NOT a case contact. Case contacts are notified as soon as possible after we receive notification from the State regarding the positive case. You will then be directed as what you need to do.

Remember the following:

Wash your hands

Don't touch your face

Wear a facemask when in public

Wash your hands

When you think you have washed your hands enough, wash them again!

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*Stillwater Billings Clinic Community Health has a Facebook page with great resources for what is happening in Stillwater County and with COVID19.