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**Muscatine County  
Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## *News Release*

### **MCPH ASKS COMMUNITY TO ENGAGE IN PRECAUTIONS**

*Public urged to protect themselves against COVID-19 with vaccine months away*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – The Muscatine County Health Department (MCHD) reminds all residents that, as we get closer to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, the initial doses of the vaccine will be limited and available first to populations prioritized according to guidance received from state and federal partners.

With broader availability of the vaccine not likely until 2021, (MCHD) is asking the community to take action now to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their community in order preserve medical resources. MCHD strongly encourages everyone to wear a mask in any circumstance where social distancing of six feet or more is not possible.

The current significant escalation in COVID-19 cases is having an impact on area health care facilities, specifically Trinity Muscatine according to Holly Barrett, Public Health Clinical Manager.

“Wearing a mask is our primary protection against droplet spread of this highly contagious virus,” Barrett said. “The surge in community spread is creating excess visits

to clinics and the emergency room for symptom evaluations and testing. This is also leading to a high spike in hospital admittance and bed shortages are occurring across our county and the state.”

The public is urged to take action now to protect themselves and reduce the spread of this virus. With the public’s help, medical providers can serve patients efficiently and quickly, and so that beds will be available for those severely compromised or with other medical issues.

"There is a sudden surge in the number of cases all over the United States, but it has really hit us hard in Iowa, “Dr. Muddasir Ashraf, Medical Director of Muscatine Public Health and a medical provider at UnityPoint Health – Trinity, said. “The hospitals statewide are at capacity and we do not want to be in a situation which is beyond everyone's control. I ask everyone to avoid any unnecessary gatherings and embrace public health guidelines of social distancing and frequent hand washing.”

"We continue to lose precious lives to this virus, but we will fight it together until we can defeat it,” Dr. Ashraf said. “This is an unprecedented situation that none of us have ever witnessed before. This pandemic is a real test of our patience and perseverance. I believe we will rise to this challenge and come out of this crisis soon.”

Everyone should continue taking protective measures to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home if you're sick - even if you think it's not COVID related symptoms
- Wash your hands often
- Always stay six feet away from others
- Wear a mask when you can't properly socially distance from others
- Recognize that older people and those with chronic health conditions like diabetes, obesity, heart issues, and organ transplants have a much higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19.



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You can also visit the [IDPH Coronavirus](#) page, and the state [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).