



## **Vilas County Public Health Department**

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### **Vilas County Public Health Department Q&A**

Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) would like to help address the numerous questions and concerns we are receiving on a daily basis. But first, in order for everyone to make the right choices for themselves and their families, assume that we have community spread of COVID-19. This means that wherever someone may go in the public, especially to establishments or events where physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained and other safety precautions such as wearing a face covering are not followed, that their chances of becoming infected with COVID-19 increases. Factors contributing to the spread of the virus are visitors from areas with high transmission rates, residents traveling to areas with high transmission rates, and people who visited multiple public places while infected with the virus.

#### **1. What does the Health Department do when someone tests positive for the COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)?**

Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) follows the guidelines set by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. We do “contact tracing” which means we contact the person who has tested positive and we find out who that individual had close contact with during the time when they were infectious. We rely on accurate information from the positive case patient to proceed with contact tracing. The Health Department then contacts those people, keeping the identity of the positive case confidential. We ask about symptoms and require isolation or quarantine for each person. This is called contact tracing and VCPHD has experience doing this sort of work with other communicable diseases in the community.

#### **2. Who would be considered a close contact?**

A close contact is defined as someone who has been within 6 feet of a confirmed positive, with or without a mask, for at least 15 minutes.

#### **3. Are individuals who are here on vacation counted in Vilas County’s test results?**

All permanent, seasonal, or short-term vacationers would be considered Vilas County cases. We have been working with our healthcare systems and they get the address of where an individual is residing when that person is tested. We then start the investigation. If we find out that person is here on a short-term vacation and have been at their permanent resident during their infectious period, we will contact that county’s health department. They would then follow-up with that individual’s close contacts that live in that county.

#### **4. Am I required to wear a cloth face covering?**

Cloth face coverings are an additional step to help slow the spread of COVID-19 when combined with every day preventive actions and social distancing in public. VCPHD does not require cloth face coverings but we do strongly recommend wearing cloth face coverings. Please do the following:

- Wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth to help protect others in case you're infected with COVID-19 but do not have symptoms.
- Wear a face covering in public when around people who don't live in your household, especially when it may be difficult for you to stay six feet apart.
- Wear a face covering correctly for maximum protection.
- Don't put the face covering around your neck or up on your forehead.
- Don't touch the face covering, and, if you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect.

#### **5. How do I protect myself from getting COVID-19?**

The best ways to protect yourself, family, and community are the following:

- Avoiding social gatherings of any size, with people of all ages who do not live together (including playdates and sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors and non-essential workers in your house);
- Practicing physical distancing when in the public by staying 6 feet away from others;
- Wear cloth face coverings;
- Taking special precautions to protect high-risk individuals;
- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water;
- Covering coughs and sneezes (into the sleeve, elbow, or tissue, and not hands);
- Regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces;
- Not shaking hands;
- Avoiding touching your face;
- Staying at home as much as possible, avoid travel outside of your community.

#### **6. Why is the data reported from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services sometimes different than the data reported by Vilas County Public Health Department?**

VCPHD receives all positive cases from a healthcare provider, whether it is a phone call, a fax, or a notification through the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) – an electronic database where all reportable communicable diseases get reported to health departments. When this occurs, the county that is provided may not match the physical address or an individual no longer resides in Vilas County. When a public health nurse is investigating a positive case of COVID-19 or any other communicable disease, the address and county of residence is verified with the client. If a client resides in a different county, VCPHD updates the information in WEDSS and contacts the health department that the case resides in. There is a time lapse between

WEDSS and when WI DHS reports the data, especially in a situation with thousands being tested.

In the future, please visit our Health Department's website at <https://health.vilascountywi.gov/> for current reporting of COVID-19 testing results or friend on us Facebook.

Other Resources:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>

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