



Southeastern Idaho Public Health

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Social Gatherings Have a Big Impact on COVID-19 Cases

Social gatherings are a common denominator in the rise of cases of COVID-19 in southeast Idaho. With Idaho moving through the stages of reopening, numbers permissible to gather have increased to 10 – 50 people. However, gatherings must be done safely and that means keeping at least 6 feet apart and utilizing other precautionary measures like wearing a cloth face covering and providing opportunities for good hand hygiene.

“Whenever you get together with those outside of your household there is the potential risk of spreading COVID-19,” said Maggie Mann, Southeastern Idaho Public Health (SIPH) Director. “Practicing physical distancing and wearing a cloth face covering is the new normal and should be practiced even as restrictions in Idaho move through the stages of reopening.”

COVID-19 is two to three times more contagious than flu, which means the virus can spread rapidly from person to person. Individuals who may be infected with COVID-19 who don’t have symptoms, or a person who feels completely healthy and has not yet been tested can be spreading the virus unknowingly. For some who are infected, it can take up to 14 days for those symptoms to appear, meaning that they can be spreading the virus unknowingly for days or even up to two weeks before they start to feel sick.

“As long as there are asymptomatic people in our communities, spread to others will continue to occur,” said Mann. “Asymptomatic individuals can worsen the spread and infection rate of COVID-19 now, considering that Idaho has begun to reopen most of its economy.”

With a potential vaccine projected to still be many months away, SIPH is still recommending that individuals avoid group gatherings. Increased COVID-19 cases underscore the importance of practicing COVID-19 risk reduction strategies which include:

- Staying home if sick.
- Practicing physical-distancing (maintaining at least 6 feet between individuals).
- Wearing a fabric face covering or mask when in public settings where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or our sleeve.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer.

For more information regarding COVID-19 visit siphidaho.org or call the Southeastern Idaho Public Health Hotline Monday – Friday from 9:00 am – 4:30 pm at 208.234.5875. You can also watch us live on Facebook Monday - Friday at 11 am.