



# Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

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PREVENT • PROMOTE • PROTECT

## News Release

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For Immediate Release

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### **Coronavirus Information for Southwest Nebraska**

The risk to southwest Nebraska residents becoming ill with the new coronavirus is low. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department is provided with up-to-date information which is available to help people stay informed.

“We have received a few questions regarding the coronavirus,” states Kathie Skeen, Emergency Planning Coordinator for Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “It is important to keep southwest Nebraskans informed and up to date.”

As of February 4, 2020, there were 11 confirmed cases in the United States, but none in Nebraska or the surrounding states.

According to health officials, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Contact your healthcare provider’s office before seeking treatment if you suspect you may be ill with coronavirus.

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019 nCoV) is a new virus that causes respiratory (breathing) illness. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak of respiratory illness that began in December in Wuhan, China.

Patients with 2019-nCoV have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. There is currently no vaccine to protect against 2019-nCoV. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Kathie Skeen states, “Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department already has plans in place for this kind of situation and the health department is reviewing those plans to place into action if it becomes necessary.”

Skeen said that “the situation is continually changing, with new developments daily, but the health department is working with state and national partners to monitor the situation and is receiving and passing along the most current guidance.”

According to Skeen, the health department is working closely with local preparedness partners in southwest Nebraska counties, including hospitals, healthcare professionals and emergency managers. “We are sharing the most current guidelines and recommendations and making sure we have everything in place to respond should any local cases of coronavirus infection show up in the nine-county health district,” she said.

Even though current risk is low, Skeen encourages residents to stay informed. She recommends the CDC website for the most up-to-date and accurate information and guidance. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) website is updated frequently and includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), fact sheets, updated information on the number and location of current cases, recommendations for travelers and travel restrictions, guidelines for health professionals and labs, archived video recordings of national briefings, and much more,” Skeen said.

For more information, contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> (one block north of Arby’s) in McCook or 501 Broadway in Imperial (5<sup>th</sup> Street entrance). Information can also be found on the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) or on Facebook and Twitter.

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