



RAYMOND F. PRZYBELSKI, DIRECTOR
(715) 345-5350 or Toll Free (866) 920-2525
FAX (715) 345-5966

RUTH GILFRY HUMAN RESOURCES BUILDING
817 WHITING AVENUE
STEVENS POINT, WI 54481-5292

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

pcpublichealth@co.portage.wi.us

MASK DISCUSSION CONTINUES AS PORTAGE COUNTY REACHES 300TH CASE OF COVID-19

July 23, 2020

Stevens Point, WI—On July 7, 2020, Portage County Health and Human Services-Division of Public Health (PCHHS-DPH) confirmed its 200th case of COVID-19. Now, only 15 days after the 200th case was identified, Portage County has now surpassed 300 confirmed cases of COVID-19. On Tuesday, July 21, Wisconsin marked its highest rate of new cases to date, 1,117. While testing capacity has expanded across the state, Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Andrea Palm stated in a media briefing on July 14, 2020 that an increase in new cases across the state "...are not the result of more testing. These numbers are the result of significant community spread here in Wisconsin." (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O8k0aAAIjk&feature=youtu.be>)

As of 2:00pm on Wednesday, July 22, 2020, Portage County has 52 (17%) active COVID-19 cases and 251 (83%) recovered cases. The largest number of confirmed positive cases in Portage County continue to be those between the ages of 20-29, or 30.3% of cases. Wisconsin Department of Health Services recently released a new database which shows activity-level across the state for COVID-19. Currently, all but 14 counties in Wisconsin are indicating a high activity level of COVID-19 and only one county, Burnett, is considered to have a low activity level of COVID-19.. This dashboard is currently updated weekly on Wednesdays after 2 p.m. View the resource at this link:

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

The safety of our community is the responsibility of all of Portage County residents. While the discussion around effectiveness, safety, and ethics of implementing a county-wide mask mandate continues, we want to offer the following resources regarding the effectiveness of wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

On effectiveness of masks, University of California San Francisco: <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/06/417906/still-confused-about-masks-heres-science-behind-how-face-masks-prevent>

Considerations for wearing a mask, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

As positive COVID-19 cases continue to increase, practicing the following safety precautions continues to be the most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- **Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available**
- **Cover coughs and sneezes**
- **Avoid touching your face in public**
- **Practice physical distancing of at least 6 feet from people not in your household**

- **Avoid large gatherings**
- **Avoid non-essential travel**
- **Wear a cloth face covering in situations where physical distancing can't be maintained**
- **Stay home when sick**

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever and chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Fatigue and body/muscle aches
- Diarrhea, vomiting and nausea

The community's response to following COVID-19 safety precautions is one of the keys to slowing the virus spread and improving the wellbeing of our community. If you have questions, please call or email our department at (715) 345-5350, option 8, or PCPublicHealth@co.portage.wi.us. **For additional information, visit Portage County's COVID-19 data and information dashboard at this link: <https://coronavirus-response-portage-county-portagecowi.hub.arcgis.com/> .** **For more information regarding COVID-19 activity levels throughout the state, visit the Wisconsin's Department of Health Services website at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm> .**

If you have general COVID-19 questions call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898211 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

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