



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

We are Most Likely in a Transitional Time for the COVID-19 Virus Before it Becomes Endemic

Sterling, Colo. – March 7, 2022: As COVID-19 cases begin to decline, and mask mandates are lifting, virus mitigation is being reevaluated. Although there has been a lot of talk about the “New Normal”, we aren’t there yet. There will likely be a transitional period before the virus becomes endemic like the flu, where it mainly circulates around at certain times of the year and, like the flu may require yearly vaccinations. During this in-between phase there will likely be times of progress (as we are seeing now with lower case rates and less hospitalizations) to reversals where our health system will once again become stressed and recommendations will change. While many of the precautionary measures, such as masking, might be relaxed by health officials now, expect that they could be reinstated if surges in COVID-19 cases occur. With that said, here are some insights that may help give direction through this transitional period.

Although transmission of COVID-19 has decreased there is still a possibility of infection and masking remains an important tool to reduce the risk of infection. While many of us are comfortable no longer wearing masks, masks are still recommended indoors for people with chronic medical conditions and in high-risk communities. Therefore, be kind and respectful. We can’t know the situations people are dealing with in their personal

lives. It's possible they are immunocompromised or are protecting someone close to them. Because of the high-risk individuals that frequent some organizations, there will also continue to be businesses and organizations, such as hospitals, clinics and long-term care facilities that require the wearing of masks. We need to be considerate when in those locations. It's a good idea to keep a mask in your purse or wallet just in case you are asked to wear a mask.

Even as restrictions are lifted, there is more risk of contracting COVID-19 in some settings. To determine your comfort level in attending any event you may want to consider where you plan to go and avoid crowded and/or confined spaces, and close-contact settings where people are conversing. The risk continues to increase in places or events where these factors overlap.

Beyond masking, there are other basic mitigation practices that everyone is still encouraged to practice. First of all, it's important to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations and get tested if experiencing symptoms. If you feel sick, stay home, isolate yourself and seek care if needed. Avoid touching your face. Cover your cough and sneezes with your elbow. Keep hands clean and wash them often. If possible, keep a distance of at least 6" apart from others and regularly disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces regularly.

Travel season will begin soon with spring break and summer just around the corner. It is good to keep in mind that travel mandates and quarantines will still be in effect for some states and for some international travel, so be sure to check requirements before traveling. They may also change quickly, so check on them often before leaving. Looking up guidelines and policies for every location you will be visiting, even lay-over airports, would also be a good plan so you are not caught unprepared.

Earlier in the pandemic there were limited options to slow the spread of COVID-19. It is hopeful that future COVID-19 mitigation efforts will be less disruptive as we will move forward towards a 'new normal' by combining the tried-and-true basics, with new medical developments, such as vaccinations and therapeutic treatments. It's also true that as this virus continues to evolve, public health recommendations will adapt to the changing conditions and, as before, Northeast Colorado Health Department will continue to share the most relevant guidance with our communities. To keep up to date with Northeast Colorado COVID-19 numbers and situation, go to www.nchd.org.

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