



Chisago County Health and Human Services Public Health Division



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Why COVID-19 Testing is so important

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

Just under 23,000 COVID-19 tests have been performed in Chisago County, compare that to our neighbors in Pine County (Under 10,000) and Isanti County (Under 12,000). Of that number of tests performed 4.8% of Chisago County's population tested positive. The percent positive is a critical measure because it gives us an indication how widespread infection is in our county—and whether levels of testing are keeping up with levels of disease transmission. The percent positive will be high if the number of positive tests is too high, or if the number of total tests is too low. A higher percent positive suggests higher transmission and that there are likely more people with COVID-19 in the community who haven't been tested yet. In the past two months Chisago County's percent positivity rate has been steadily increasing from 2.1% to now up to 4.8%. According to the World Health Organization, the higher the percent positive is, the more concerning it is. As a rule of thumb, one threshold for the percent positive being "too high" is 5%.

Simply put, there are two ways to lower the percent positivity rate: Reduce the amount of COVID-19 transmission or increase the number of people who get tested. When there is not enough people getting tested, people who are infected with COVID-19 may not know they are positive, and they don't know to isolate themselves—reducing the chances that they will infect others and allowing them to seek treatment earlier, likely reducing disease severity and the risk of long-term disability, or death.

Testing of people who have been in contact with others who have a confirmed infection is also important. A negative test doesn't mean you're in the clear; you could become infectious later. Therefore, even if you test negative, you need to continue to protect yourself and others by washing your hands frequently, physically distancing, and wearing a face mask. A positive test makes it clear that you have to isolate yourself, and that others with whom you have been in contact since the time of your exposure should also get tested.

Let's all continue to protect ourselves and others from getting infected, and get tested if you believe you have COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.

For the more information about COVID-19, visit @ChisagoCountyPublicHealth on Facebook.