

IREDELL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Iredell County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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Gathering Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Masking Policy for County Operated Facilities

As we near Independence Day, a day many individuals often gather together to celebrate, we want to make sure our community does not put their guard down to the dangers of COVID-19. On June 29th, we had a record high number of hospitalizations reaching 20. Since May 30th, Iredell County has seen a 118% increase in the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests. Just over a month ago we were seeing a 4% positive rate of COVID-19 tests, but since then we have seen a steady upward trend to a current high of a nearly 9% positive rate. While we have seen a 213% increase in the number of weekly tests being administered from the beginning of May until today, its most important to note the near doubling of the tests that are coming back with a positive result. Of concern is the 200% increase in total number of positive cases from 251 on May 30th to 746 on June 29th. This is a clear indication of increased community spread.

Many individuals have made plans to host and attend gatherings for Independence Day; therefore, we want to offer the following considerations for enhancing the protection of individuals and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

A gathering refers to a planned or spontaneous event, indoors or outdoors, with a small number of people participating or a large number of people in attendance such as a community event or gathering, concert, festival, parade, wedding, or sporting event. With the continuation of Phase 2, by the authority of Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order 147, indoor gatherings of more than 10 people and outdoor gatherings in an enclosed environment of more than 25 people are prohibited. The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19. Since our County is currently experiencing a higher rate of community transmission of COVID-19, there is a higher risk of COVID-19 spreading during local gatherings at this time.

COVID-19 is believed to be mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may also spread to hands from contaminated surfaces then to the nose, mouth or eyes, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices such as handwashing, wearing a cloth face covering, maintaining 6 feet of distance, staying home when you are sick, and regularly cleaning and disinfecting are important ways to prevent the virus's spread.

Central Office
318 Turnersburg Hwy
Statesville, NC 28625
704-878-5300

Mooresville Site
610 E. Center Avenue
Mooresville, NC 28115
704-664-5281

Environmental Health
349 N. Center Street
Statesville, NC 28677
704-878-5305 x3456

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners are taking precautionary action to protect its employees from increasing community transmission of COVID-19 by implementing the use of face coverings for employees of Iredell County, as well as the public visiting County-operated facilities. This step is necessary in maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of the employees of Iredell County, and the County at-large. Beginning at midnight on July 5, 2020, face coverings will be required by employees of Iredell County who are interacting with the public indoors, and outdoors if unable to maintain a distancing of six-feet. Employees will also wear face coverings if they are unable to maintain social distancing of six-feet from co-workers, or in a shared workspace or common area, such as hallway and breakroom. All visitors to County-operated facilities, unless otherwise excluded or an exception applies, must wear a face covering indoors and outdoors, if a six-foot distance cannot be maintained. The County will provide at no charge, one mask for personal use by visitors and members of the public seeking services who do not have a mask. No one will be denied services where unable to wear a face covering as a result of one or more of the exceptions; County employees will take measures to make reasonable accommodations in such instances. For more information related to the Iredell County Government face covering proclamation, please visit the Iredell County website under COVID-19 to read the policy in its entirety or reach out to the Iredell County Government at 704-878-3050.

Before attending or hosting a gathering this summer, please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Considerations for Events and Gatherings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>). This document provides great guidance related to reducing the spread of COVID-19, maintaining healthy environments, maintaining healthy operations, and preparing for when someone gets sick.

We encourage our community to celebrate safely this holiday weekend, and throughout the summer. Iredell County Public Health Officials continue to encourage individuals to protect themselves to help lessen the spread of COVID-19. How to protect yourself and others:

- Practice social distancing, which means avoiding gatherings of more than 10 people and keeping 6 feet or more between yourself and others
- Wear cloth mask or face covering when out in public where you may be around people, like grocery stores or pharmacies, and still try to practice social distancing
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw it in the trash
- Stay home when you're sick
- Keep distance from others who are sick
- Avoid touching your face
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces in common areas like doorknobs, remotes, light switches, tables and handles.

Individuals with general questions about COVID-19 or who need access to support services can call **2-1-1** (or 888-892-1162) for assistance 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

Additional information related to COVID-19 can be found at the following resources:

NCDHHS-DPH: www.ncdhhs.gov/covid19

CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Iredell County Health Department: <https://nc-iredellcounty.civicplus.com/1383/Coronavirus-COVID-19>

NC 2-1-1: Call 2-1-1 or 888-892-1162 or text COVIDNC to 898211

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