



News Release

For immediate release

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Unified Health Command Requests Healthcare Facilities to Restrict Visitors

Billings, MT – The Unified Health Command (UHC), made up of Billings Clinic, St. Vincent Healthcare, RiverStone Health and Yellowstone County Disaster and Emergency Services, has recommended that visitors to area healthcare facilities be temporarily restricted. These recommendations extend to hospitals, clinics, long-term care and assisted living facilities.

Voluntary visitor restrictions apply to:

- People with respiratory symptoms, such as coughs, colds, flu, sore throats, aches, and fever.
- All children and young adults under the age of 18 (hospital restrictions may vary).
- People who have recently come into close contact with anyone who was ill with colds, flu or other respiratory symptoms.

“The restrictions are part of an effort to prevent and control the spread of respiratory diseases in our community,” said John Felton, Yellowstone County’s Health Officer and CEO of RiverStone Health. To date, there are NO CASES of the new Coronavirus known as COVID-19 in Montana, but the flu season continues and the community can take steps to prevent the spread of all respiratory diseases.

Voluntary visiting restrictions to healthcare facilities will continue until there is a decline in overall cases of flu and other respiratory diseases in Montana. In addition, healthcare facilities may limit the number of visitors and the length of visits to patients and residents in those facilities. These measures will help protect the health and safety of patients, visitors and staff.

Healthy visitors to healthcare facilities should follow these guidelines:

- Clean your hands before and after visiting a patient.
- Always cover your cough and use a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.

In addition to visitor restrictions to area healthcare facilities, the UHC reminds everyone to keep in mind everyday preventive actions:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or coughing into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay at home if you’re sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly, including countertops and sinks.

As this situation evolves, the public can find accurate and timely information on COVID-19 through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, www.cdc.gov/COVID19, as well as through RiverStone Health, RiverStoneHealth.org or the public health information line at 406.651.6415. The CDC offers specific guidance for long-term care facilities, schools, faith-based organizations and others about preparing for a disease outbreak.

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