

Frequently Asked Questions

Answering Questions About Coronavirus

Answers provided via collaborations with DPHHS

Q1: What is the point of reopening businesses and rolling back restrictions before a good vaccine is developed and distributed?

A1: Montana's response to COVID-19 has been necessary to slow the spread of new infections. Slowing the spread of new infections gave the healthcare system and the public health system time to prepare to test and treat a potential influx of COVID-19 patients. These efforts have been effective. To date, the Montana health care system has not been overwhelmed and we continue to work to increase our testing capacity. Through the collective efforts of all Montanans to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, Montana now has one of the lowest per capita rates of infection in the United States.

Public health experts and scientists warn that an effective vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is at least 18 months away. Governor Bullock recognizes that for the economic and mental and physical wellness of Montana residents it is not practical to remain at home while we await an effective vaccine or treatment. Thus, Montana must begin a measured approach to return to a new "normal."

This phased reopening approach is based on up-to-date data and statewide preparedness. It works to mitigate the risk of resurgence. It protects the most vulnerable. It can be implemented on a statewide, tribal, or county-by-county basis. And it contains the ability to adjust phases based on local or regional conditions.

Q2: Some people have been experiencing very bad depression and are looking for help. Is there a number in Montana where people can reach out and get Tele-health services?

A2: Yes, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services offers a few different mental health services.

The **Montana Warmline** is a free, confidential service staffed by individuals with lived experience who understand the behavioral health needs of individuals. The service provides early crisis intervention with emotional support that can prevent a crisis. The Warmline is available at 877-688-3377 or at <http://montanawarmline.org/>. The Warmline has also added a chat bubble to their website and have started an online peer supported anxiety group. The Warmline intends to continue the online group twice per day.

The **Montana Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 800-273-TALK (8255) is also available. The **Montana Crisis Text Line**, which can be accessed by texting "MT" to 741741,

is available as well. And, there's also **Thrive**, a program delivered entirely online to help reduce depression and anxiety symptoms. Adult Montanans who are interested in signing up for the program may visit thriveformontana.com/.

Q3: Can the elderly and at-risk members of the community who need lifesaving medicine, get those medicines delivered so they don't have to expose themselves?

A3: Services, such as food or pharmacy delivery, are available in several counties to older persons and other at-risk community members. Depending on an individual's insurance provider, mail delivery of prescription medications may be available from certain providers (e.g., Costco, Walgreens, etc.).

Q4: What kind of an uptick in the use of drugs and/or alcohol has the state seen during this crisis?

A4: Both before and throughout this pandemic, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has been monitoring the health and well-being of Montana residents. As of the end of April, the number of deaths related to drug or alcohol use has remained the same as what would normally be expected.

Q5: Has the Governor made it mandatory to wear masks while going to the grocery stores and where can we buy masks?

A5: Non-medical face coverings are not required but are strongly encouraged while in public, especially in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing (grocery/retail stores, pharmacies, public transportation, etc.).

Masks may be available for purchase at local pharmacies and/or hardware stores; however, surgical masks and N-95 respirators are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

Q6: Is it okay for people to go on hikes, drives, or walks during the phase 1 re-opening?

A6: With the exception of out of state non-work travelers who are required to quarantine for either 14 days or the duration of their time in Montana, whichever is shorter, individuals can engage in outdoor activity but should still comply with social distancing (6' from others) and avoid gatherings of 10 people or more.

Montanans are discouraged from outdoor recreation activities that pose enhanced risks of injury or could otherwise stress the ability of local first responders to address the COVID-19 emergency (e.g., backcountry skiing in a manner inconsistent with avalanche recommendations or in closed terrain). Local jurisdictions may choose to implement

more stringent measures, so be sure to check with your local City/County Health Department for restrictions or additional requirements.

If you are quarantining, you cannot leave for groceries, public outdoor recreation (including hunting/fishing), to go to work or any other activity. You must remain at your place of quarantine for the duration of the quarantine period. Exceptions will only be made in the event of a medical emergency, fire, natural disaster or other act of God preventing the ongoing healthful habitation of a residence.

Q7: Does the Governor have a plan for the homeless who may be infected or at-risk of infection?

A7: Individuals experiencing homelessness are strongly urged to obtain shelter, and governmental and other entities are strongly urged to make such shelter available as soon as possible and to the maximum extent practicable and to use in their operation COVID-19 risk mitigation practices recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

For further information, please view the following resource:

State Emergency Operations Center Joint Information Center (JIC)
[State of Montana Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions](#)