



Helping Others with comPassion and Empathy - H.O.P.E.

Urgent News Release #70

Richland County Health & Human Services
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RICHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH TO END WEEKEND AND HOLIDAY DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS

Richland Center, WI: After two years of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Richland County Public Health plans to shift away from weekend and holiday disease investigations. This change will occur on March 1, 2022. Disease investigations will occur during weekdays, to the extent possible, as Richland County begins to focus on COVID-related activities which will provide the greatest benefit to county residents.

With the Omicron variant, we have learned that with its shorter incubation period, rapid transmission, and substantial disease burden, by the time our team was able to connect with those who had tested positive, many other persons were already exposed or ill. These factors reduced both the feasibility and positive impact of universal disease investigations for all reported COVID-19 cases.

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed, too, and as such, our response also needs to change. The widespread availability of vaccines, at-home tests, the development of new epidemiology tools, such as

genomic surveillance, and the growing role of COVID-19 therapies have given medicine and public health a broader set of tools to decrease the burden of COVID-19 disease.

“This shift is meant to empower individuals to act when they suspect they (or a loved one) has COVID-19 infection. If COVID-19 is suspected, seek testing, immediately isolate to prevent transmission to others and talk to your healthcare provider about medical treatment if you are at higher risk for severe outcomes. Individuals should promptly notify any close contacts of their exposure. In addition, individuals should contact their employer, school, or childcare provider. Persons should continue to follow isolation (when testing positive) and quarantine (when exposed) guidelines provided by Centers for Disease Control and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services”, stated Rose Kohout, Richland County Health Officer.

Information on what to do if you test positive are available in many places, including the Richland County COVID-19 website: <https://covid.co.richland.wi.us/> We want to assure residents that Richland County Public Health will remain a resource for anyone who is unable to access the internet or those seeking further guidance or answers to specific questions.

It remains incredibly important that individuals take actions that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Everyone 5 years of age and older should get vaccinated against COVID-19, and those 12 years of age and older should get a booster dose when they are eligible. Getting vaccinated and boosted are critical tools in preventing severe disease, hospitalization and death. To find a vaccine provider, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). Everyone over the age of 2 years old should wear a well-fitting mask in indoor public places.

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