

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Lily Walsh
Communications Officer
406-880-0317
lwalsh@missoulacounty.us



Wastewater Surveillance Shows Presence of COVID-19 Rising in city of Missoula

Health officials have seen an increase in the levels of detected COVID-19 in wastewater surveillance in the city of Missoula. Wastewater surveillance collects wastewater samples from a pool of people in a certain area. Sampling provides critical data, such as those infected with COVID who are asymptomatic or go untested.

Recent data provided by the City of Missoula Wastewater Division shows around 1.5 million wastewater effective concentration copies from March 25 to Sept. 25 of this year. Effective concentration measures the amount of viral RNA produced by COVID-19 found in a wastewater sample. Results from the most recent wastewater sampling show a rapid increase in the number of copies per liter over the last 6 months. In April of this year, the number of copies was around 500 thousand, steadily decreasing to near zero in mid-July before skyrocketing to over one million in August.

“As we’re seeing an increase in COVID in our wastewater surveillance and an increase in outbreaks, it’s important for people to be sure to take precautions. It is especially important to be a good neighbor and protect those most vulnerable to severe illness from COVID,” said Cindy Farr, director of Health Promotion at Missoula Public Health.

As fall approaches, so do the chances for upper respiratory illnesses. Members of the public are encouraged to report positive at-home COVID tests to the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) so that officials can keep a better pulse on how many cases are currently in the county. [Click here](#) to submit a report of a positive at-home test to DPHHS.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should take a test either at home or with a healthcare provider. Symptoms of COVID include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or running nose or nausea or vomiting and diarrhea. If you are experiencing symptoms, stay home. If you have been exposed to COVID, wear a mask for 10 days and monitor symptoms.

Anyone who tests positive for COVID should isolate from others for five days after symptom onset. That person should also notify close contacts that they tested positive.

More information can be found on the Center for Disease Control's website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

Cindy Farr is available for interviews at cfarr@missoulacounty.us.