

# Local healthcare and public health leaders: Urge community to fight COVID-19 by celebrating holiday weekend with social distancing

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NEENAH, Wis. – Leaders with area health systems and city and county public health departments today issued a joint plea for Northeast and Central Wisconsin residents to fulfill their essential role in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 by observing this weekend's holidays while following social distancing guidelines.

“We are asking all of our friends and neighbors to follow the governor’s Safer At Home Order, especially heading into a holiday weekend that is so important spiritually,” said Imran Andrabi, MD, ThedaCare President and CEO. “We are in a critical phase of treating this virus and we are urging community members to help us by staying at least 6 feet apart from anyone, even family, who does not reside in their home.”

Leaders are asking the public to consider the risk of exposing their grandparents, parents, siblings, friends or co-workers to the virus by not following social distancing recommendations.

To maximize our impact on flattening the curve, the following guidelines are advised:

- Practice good hand hygiene by thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching frequently used items or

surfaces and before eating.

- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces, including mobile devices.
- Avoid touching your face and wear a cloth face covering if you absolutely must go out.
- Remain 6 feet apart from anyone not living in your home.

On Thursday, Gov. Evers said churches can hold drive-up services. If residents take part in those drive-up services, they are urged to go directly to and from services.

“Access to care is critical, and we know that includes spiritual care, too,” said Bernie Sherry, Senior Vice President, Ascension and Ministry Market Executive, Ascension Wisconsin. “Our local faith leaders are showing us the way by using alternative forms of worship, such as setting up online offerings. We are urging everyone to make the most of these efforts.”

Prior to collaborating on this joint request, the region’s health care systems have taken substantive and proactive steps to reduce new COVID-19 infections by deferring non-urgent procedures, implementing visitor restrictions, creating respiratory clinics and adding capacity to serve additional patients. They have launched multiple interactive resources including online symptom checkers, community hotlines and telemedicine capabilities to allow patients to engage with their providers from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

“This virus can be transferred from asymptomatic people, those who don’t show any signs of the illness, to others,” said Kurt Eggebrecht, City of Appleton Health Director. “It reinforces why it is more critical than ever that we stay home as much as possible.”

Public health departments are encouraging community members to find alternatives to holiday celebrations such as attending religious services virtually and connecting with family members through video calls.

“Based on recent and ongoing experiences in other parts of the country and around the world, we know that social distancing is working,” said Tracey Froiland, Fox

Valley Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition (FV-HERC) Coordinator.

“Following preventative steps will help protect you and your family, and will help protect our healthcare workers, first responders and law enforcement officers during this critical time. We can do this together.”