

May 11, 2020 "Let's be Cautious as we Progress"

9:00 PM

Big Horn County

COVID-19

Update/Response

For Immediate Release

COVID-19 update: as of May 10th at 1p Wyoming has 504 – laboratory-confirmed cases, 158 – probable cases and 7 – COVID-19 related deaths.

We have received approval for two variances that will allow us to attend church and do outdoor dining as long as we maintain social distancing.

We are awaiting a variance for limited indoor seated dining for restaurants and bars and anticipate that will be received within 48 hours.

<https://www.bighorncountyywy.gov/component/edocman/bighorn1-outdoordining-may82020-copy/viewdocument/625?Itemid=0>

<https://www.bighorncountyywy.gov/component/edocman/bighornvariance-2-may82020/viewdocument/626?Itemid=0>

But opening up has consequences - as my mother used to say, "when you pick up one end of the stick, you pick up the other. The New York Times stated, "*The world is entering a very risky period with the coronavirus — and many health experts and ordinary people are nervous. ... There are still huge unanswered questions about the virus. How many people have it, and, by extension, how deadly is it? How often do children spread it? Are people who've had it immune from getting it again?*"

Expert epidemiologists say we have unmet benchmarks before reopening. Some questions that still exist are:

- How many people do we have to test before we know where we are?
- Will we see a resurgence with relaxation of precautions?
- Will that even affect us in Wyoming?
- How do we balance protection of our citizens with the freedoms we enjoy?
- What are we willing to do to be safe?
- What are we willing to give up?
- What are we willing to accept as the new normal?
- How much are we willing to spend in money, resources, frontline worker hours and lives?
- What will the tourists bring and how should we restrict them?
- Is herd immunity possible with COVID-19?

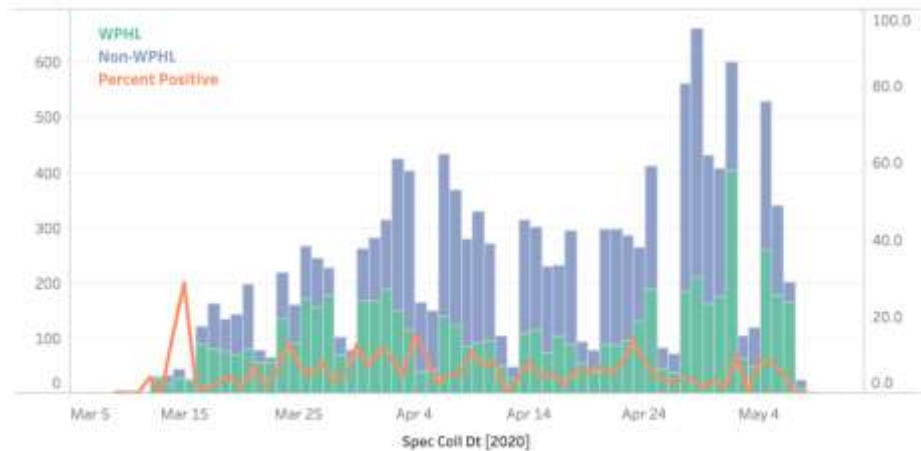
COVID-19 Resulted Tests at Wyoming State Public Health Laboratory and Commercial Laboratories

PLEASE NOTE: The following data is based on number of resulted tests. Some cases may have multiple positive results so testing numbers will not match case counts. Commercial labs are required to report positive test results to WDH; negative results are not reported consistently.

COVID-19 Resulted Tests

Non-WPHL	7,372
WPHL	5,044
Grand Total	13,416

COVID-19 Resulted Tests by Collection Date; Lab Type and Percent Positive



No one has the answers to all these questions. We are doing the best we can to use the data have to guide our direction for our citizens. We may never know if we overreacted in our measures. My mother reminded me of the horrible Polio epidemic she lived through taking care of the children at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City who were in all the iron lungs. It is amazing to me with all the advances we have made since then, that a little tiny virus can still bring my profession to its knees.

One of my favorite military surgeons once said, "With all our advancements and technology, medicine is still a messy imperfect science." But we do the best we can to save lives and improve our patients' health and quality of life.



Let me address the idea of herd immunity as many have stated that we should just let COVID-19 run its course and let us all get immune. Herd immunity is the principle that if enough people have been exposed and develop antibodies to the illness that the contagion will cease and will protect those that are vulnerable. This is similar to the idea of us all wearing masks. The percentage of the population needed to be immune to control the spread is different for each disease. For mumps we need 92% immunity and for measles we need approximately 90-95%. Here are two good articles that talk more about that: <https://www.healthline.com/health/herd-immunity#how-it-works>
<https://www.sciencealert.com/why-herd-immunity-will-not-save-us-from-the-covid-19-pandemic>

First, we don't even know if getting the virus will protect us from reinfection from another strain. Some early evidence suggests it will not.

Second, early projections suggest we would need at least 70-80% population immunity for COVID-19.

Third, consider the following quote from Johns Hopkins:

"Some have entertained the idea of "controlled voluntary infection," akin to the "chickenpox parties" of the 1980s. However, COVID-19 is 100 times more lethal than the chickenpox. For example, on the Diamond Princess cruise ship, the mortality rate among those infected with SARS-CoV-2 was 1%. Someone who goes to a "coronavirus party" to get infected would not only be substantially increasing their own chance of dying in the next month, they would also be putting their families and friends at risk. COVID-19 is now the leading cause of death in the United States, killing almost 2,000 Americans every day. Chickenpox never killed more than 150 Americans in a year. ... Even in hotspots like New York City that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, initial studies suggest that perhaps 15-21% of people have been exposed so far. In getting to that level of exposure, more than 17,500 of the 8.4 million people in New York City (about 1 in every 500 New Yorkers) have died..."

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/from-our-experts/early-herd-immunity-against-covid-19-a-dangerous-misconception?fbclid=IwAR1jsk-2n2UclulqL2kUWOMAfptAwTGo8AMvfwY5nU3RBy9XQnNoalZp_Y

I personally don't believe with our dispersed population in Big Horn County, we would ever see those numbers. But I certainly don't want to see that many of our citizens ill, and I know you don't. That's why our Big Horn County Incident Management Team has moved deliberately and cautiously in sync with national and state guidance to protect our own.

Stay safe as we roll out relaxed restrictions.
"Let's be Cautious as we Progress"

Respectfully,
David Weston, Fairbanks, MD, FAAFP
Big Horn County Health Officer
and the entire
Big Horn County Incident Management Team



For Sources of Information on COVID-19:

1. Big Horn County Public Health Website:
<https://www.bighorncountyywy.gov>
<https://www.bighorncountyywy.gov/departments/public-health>
2. Big Horn County COVID-19 INFORMATION LINE 307-568-4031
Or Email us @ covid-19@bighorncountyywy.gov
3. Park County Public Health Coronavirus Information Line: 754-1870 or 527-1870
(Updated regularly). Big Horn County may use this.
4. Up to date announcements from Wyoming Department of Health as they are released Wyoming Department of Health
Website: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus>.
5. CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
6. Wyoming Department of Health State Orders:
<https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>