For Immediate Release Contact: Molly Dahlgren  
Date: March 30, 2020 Phone: 402-426-1464

Blair, NE – Memorial Community Hospital and Health System (MCH&HS) is working around the clock with the State and local health departments to track and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

News and information about COVID-19 continues to spread throughout the country and cases continue to spread nationwide. The virus is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Health experts are concerned about this virus because it is new, little is known about it, and it has the potential to cause severe illness, pneumonia and death in some people. Health experts are still learning the details about how this virus is spread, but it is thought to be spread mainly from person to person.

Social distancing is being required and is vital to mitigate the spread of this virus. Social distancing is defined as being in close contact (within 6 feet) of people. This includes all persons that are not in your immediate household.

It may be possible for the virus to be spread through touching infected surfaces or objects and then touching your own mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. Diligent and frequent hand washing is very important. People can help protect themselves from COVID-19 and other respiratory infections by:

• Staying home if you are sick and avoiding close contact with those who are sick.

• Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.

• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has listed the following symptoms for COVID-19:

• Fever (100.4)

• Dry cough

• Extreme and unusual fatigue

• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

• In some cases, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea and nausea.

If a person feels the need to be evaluated at any of our clinics or Emergency Room for a COVID-19 related illness, please call and report your concern and symptoms prior to coming to the facility. It is vital that everyone does their part in the fight against COVID-19. This is not just an issue for our older population. Statistics now show COVID-19 infections are being seen in much younger age groups. Remember that while you may not feel the virus is of concern for yourself, please know that you can still contract the virus and have little to no symptoms. You can shed and transmit the virus to others who may not able to fight off the virus.

Manny Wolf, President and CEO of MCH&HS, asked for the community’s support, saying "On behalf of all the healthcare workers who are on the frontlines fighting this virus, I ask for the community’s support. We need you now more than ever to stand with us in safeguarding the health of this community by following the Directed Health Measures that are in effect for our area.” These Directed Health Measures were established by the State of Nebraska and were issued on March 25th. The Directed Health Measure in their entirety may be found on the state’s website at Nebraska.gov.

“I also want to recognize our staff for tirelessly planning, observing and following the best practices and keeping their heads up in this difficult situation," said Wolf.

Everyone is urged to follow the rules and do what is necessary in this fight to mitigate the spread in our community. COVID-19 is not just an issue for our older population. Statistics now show COVID-19 infections are being seen in much younger age groups. Remember that while you may not feel that the virus is of concern for yourself, please know that you can still contact the virus and have little to no symptoms. You can shed and transmit the virus to others who may not able to fight off the virus.

MCH&HS has a COVID-19 hotline for community members to call if they are concerned and have questions. The triage line will provide guidance and direction for symptoms and will provide answers to questions. The number for the COVID line is 402-426-1689. This number will have a clinic person available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, seven days a week. Other valuable resources include Three Rivers Public Health Department-https://threeriverspublichealth.org- 402-727-5396 and Department of Health and Human Resources-http://dhhs.ne.gov. Information is also available by dialing 211, an informational helpline and web site for essential information about COVID-19.402) 552-6645 • 8am – 8pm CST • 7 Days a Week