



NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA
INDIAN HEALTH BOARD
Indian Leadership for Indian Health

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Good News Ahead

But Challenges Remain

There is good news about Covid-19 vaccines, but we need to be vigilant for a while longer.

You have probably seen or heard the good news about the results of the Covid-19 vaccine trials. Two vaccines have reported almost 95% effectiveness in preventing infection with Covid-19. And more vaccines are on the way.

Having been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the first of these vaccines is already being distributed and Tribes are starting to receive their shipments. Health care workers and people in long term care facilities are expected to receive the first doses. In the next 6 to 9 months, the rest of the US population should be able to be vaccinated.

Covid-19 continues to surge.

With this great news about the vaccine, it is tempting to let our guard down about Covid-19. But, we must stay resolved and continue to take steps to prevent its spread. The virus is surging all across the US. Hospitals are becoming over-crowded. Tribal communities, where medical care and resources can be limited, are some of the hardest hit.

Even being vaccinated does not mean we can stop being cautious.

First, it takes several weeks for the vaccine to be effective. Second, while it is known that the vaccines either prevent or reduce the impact of being infected with Covid-19 disease, it is not yet known if they prevent asymptomatic infection which could be transmitted to others. Until the majority of the population is vaccinated, it is essential to wear a mask around people you don't live with.

Our collective commitment to fighting Covid-19 is more important now than ever before.



Want to learn more?

Visit us at:

[Npaih.org/covid-19/](https://npaih.org/covid-19/)

Or Contact:

*Sheila Hosner,
MSIH, DTMPH*

*Covid-19 Corps
Communication Specialist,*

shosner@cdcfoundation.org

Remaining Vigilant

The next 6-8 months are critical.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, but even with vaccines coming, remaining vigilant while we wait for them to be widely distributed is essential. This will help protect thousands of people. *Together, we can protect our Tribes, communities, and families.*

In the last few weeks, the most frequently reported places of exposure to Covid-19 are households, community or social activities, and workplaces. It is difficult to think that people you work and interact with might be infectious, but treating everyone you encounter outside your household as if they could have Covid-19, is the safest thing to do.

Everyday actions.

Below are the four most important actions you can continue to take to stay safe. Together they provide a layered approach to limiting risk to yourself and others, each action building on the next to add more protection.

1. **Wear masks.** Non-ventilated, multi-layer cloth masks not only help prevent you from exhaling infectious particles but from inhaling them, too. Wear masks whenever you are around people you don't live with, inside or outside.
2. **Stay at least six feet apart.** When we breathe, talk, cough, or sing we exhale microscopic droplets. Larger droplets fall out of the air at about six feet, but smaller droplets, sometimes called aerosols, can travel past six feet and remain in the air for several hours.
3. **Avoid large, indoor gatherings.** These types of gatherings are a prime place to spread Covid-19. Inside it is difficult to stay six feet apart, poor indoor air circulation can cause a concentration of aerosol particles, and surfaces have more opportunity to become contaminated due to the number of people.
4. **Wash your hands.** New studies have shown that the coronavirus can remain infectious on human skin for up to nine hours. Washing your hands frequently can help prevent spread.

Plan ahead.

As you go about your day or life, plan ahead to be safe. Have extra face coverings and hand sanitizer in your backpack, glove box, or purse; discuss safe gatherings with family and friends before events; and take a moment before gatherings to consider *location, time, and distance*.

- **Location.** Is the activity indoors or outdoors? Outdoor is better than indoor. Covid-19 stays in the air longer when indoors and can be spread by ventilation systems. Crowded indoor locations are especially high-risk.
- **Time.** How long will you be doing the activity? Shorter activities are safer. Being in “close contact,” or within six feet of an infected individual for 15 minutes over 24 hours, increases your risk of becoming infected.
- **Distance.** Can you stay at least six feet apart from others? Most germs cannot travel more than six feet from person-to-person in the air.

Thinking and planning for location, time, and distance in your activities will help you and others stay safe, but it does not replace wearing a mask or staying home altogether!

With vaccines now in sight, the light is on at the end of the tunnel – we still must stay cautious though – until our communities can be protected by it



**Get
Vaccinated**



**Wear a
Mask**



**Stay 6ft apart
and avoid
crowds**



**Wash hands
often**