



Lake Region
HEALTHCARE

Prairie Ridge
HOSPITAL & HEALTH SERVICES

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A Message to the Communities We Serve from Your Enterprise CEO, Kent Mattson

Social Distancing: A call to action from your healthcare team

Lake Region Healthcare (LRH) and Prairie Ridge Hospital and Health Services (PRHHS) are your aligned community-based healthcare organizations with locations in nine communities and who collectively serve the healthcare needs of an area roughly 80 miles by 80 miles. At this time of fast paced change and uncertainty, we are active in coordination of communication, preparedness, and response activities for COVID-19.

We are very concerned about what we are hearing from people questioning the necessity of recommendations around social distancing, isolation, work-from-home, event cancellations, school closures, and other measures taken to mitigate the threat we are facing from COVID-19. Some see these steps as overreactions and view their personal risk of contracting the virus as minimal.

To provide some clarity around this topic, our organizations are urging every individual in our communities to **take action now** in the short window of opportunity we have to collectively “Flatten the Curve”.

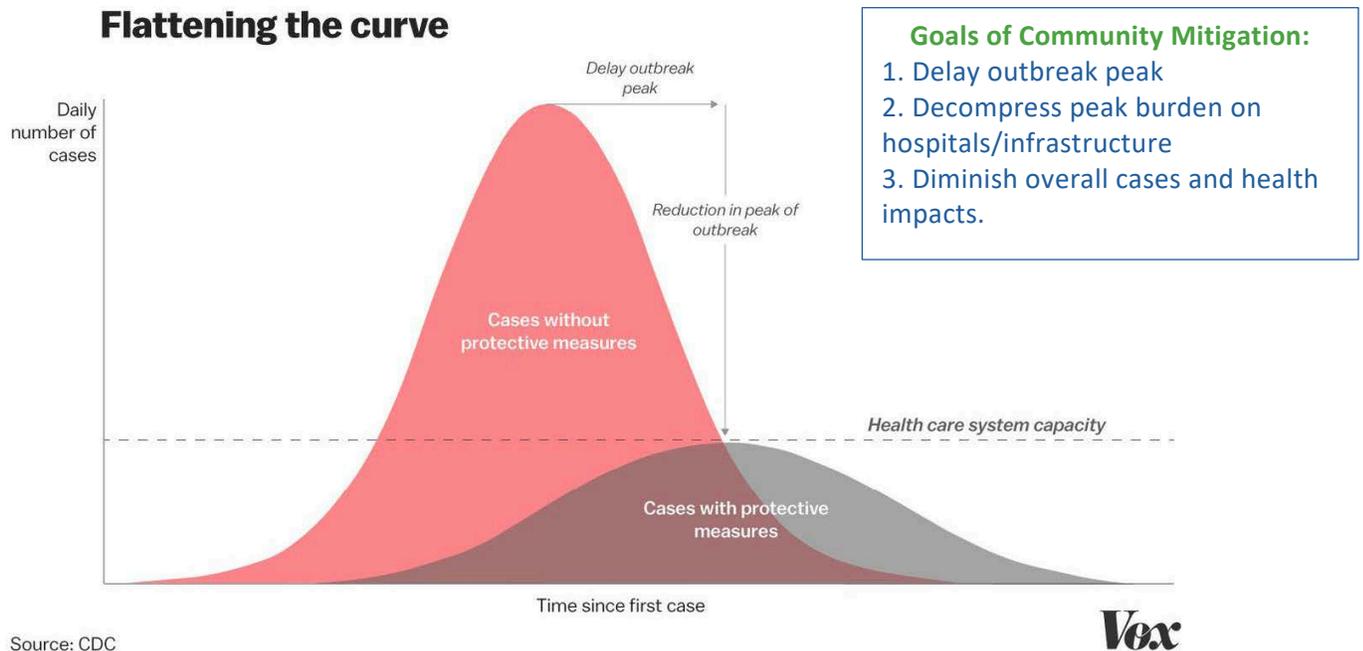
Understanding the Why?

The primary goal of social distancing is **not** only about reducing your chance of being infected with the coronavirus. Making deliberate choices to stay away from each other is designed to **slow the spread over a longer period of time** so that too many people do not get ill all at once such that our ability to provide care to critically ill patients cannot meet the demand. The decisions we make as individuals in the near term (the coming days) have the potential to make a huge impact on the trajectory of COVID-19 nationally and here in our communities. We are very concerned about conserving our resources, both human and material, should social distancing efforts fail to slow the spread enough. *Our health system will not be able to cope with the projected numbers of people who will need acute care if we collectively as individuals in our communities do not do our part to socially distance from each other starting **now**.*

On a regular day, based on the information shared with us, we have about 45,000 staffed ICU beds in the United States, which can be ramped up in a crisis to about 95,000. Even moderate current projections suggest that if current infectious trends hold, our capacity (locally and nationally) may be overwhelmed as early as mid-late April. **Thus, the primary strategies that can get us off this concerning trajectory are those that enable us to work together as a community to maintain public health by staying apart.***

How does it Work?

It's called **"Flattening the Curve."** By staying away from each other we reduce the virus' capacity to spread as quickly from person to person, thereby slowing down and spreading apart the need for healthcare resources for severe cases of COVID-19 along with the resources needed to respond to every day incidents like heart attacks, car accidents, and other emergency health needs.



The "curve" here refers to the line on a graph that rises as the number of cases of a particular infectious disease increase, then falls as that number goes down.

Flattening that curve means slowing transmission of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, so our communities and in turn, LRH and PRHHS, don't end up with an overwhelming number of cases all at the same time. It allows a spreading out of the cases anticipated to come to LRH and PRHHS, and buys precious time for science and industry to create new therapies, medications and hopefully, a vaccine.

Remember, the flatter, lower curve is better, but it takes all of us working together to make that happen. [Here is an article that illustrates the effect well](#) utilizing a simulation graphic.

Actions to Take Starting Today

Stop/Cancel/Avoid



- Regular classes at schools & universities
- Gatherings in public spaces
- Attendance at non-essential events
- Public gatherings of all sizes
- Sleepovers & parties at homes
- Visiting others in their homes
- Leaving home when ill (except for medical care)
- Using public facilities like parks, playgrounds, fitness facilities/gyms

Limit/Consider Importance



- Trips to the grocery stores and other public places. Limit the number of trips & go at lower traffic times.
- We encourage you to find ways to support local business during this difficult time, perhaps by buying gift certificates now that can be used later and utilizing drive up or drop off services when available.

Keep on or start doing these things!



- Take care of yourself
- Exercise
- Take walks/runs outside (keeping a distance of at least six feet from others)
- Connect with others through phone, video & social media
- Eat nutritious meals
- Get plenty of sleep
- Stay informed through reputable sources (we recommend [CDC](#), [MDH](#) and [WHO](#) and we have links to them at www.lrhc.org)

LRH and PRHHS are **your** community facilities, governed and locally controlled, and we are part of you. We recognize that cancelling and postponing events, staying at home and missing opportunity for socialization and recreation are inconvenient, annoying and disappointing. We encourage you to [read this excellent article](#) by one of our Emergency Physicians, Dr. Joe Dinsmore. As he states so well, there are costs we will all pay in the fight against this virus: “the cost of loneliness inherent in social isolation, the cost of domestic abuse victims secluded with their abuser, the cost of children of low-income families without school lunch, the cost of a retiree with an evaporated 401K. But for most, your mission in this war is quite literally “Netflix and chill”, and you should binge-watch Breaking Bad (or some other show) at home like someone else’s life depends on it.”

At this critical moment in time, its important to listen and heed the unified advice of disease experts and public health to change how we go about our day to day live temporarily to alter the course and help Flatten the Curve. It truly Takes A Village, and we ask you to unite and support this cause!

If you have questions about whether you qualify or should get a coronavirus test, you can call your primary care team at the numbers below and/or consider calling the Minnesota Department of Public Health hotline at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903. Please don’t just walk into the clinic or hospital — call first so that we can give you the best advice — which might be to go to our drive-through testing process. Of course, if it is an emergency call 911.

- Lake Region Healthcare Fergus Falls Clinic: 218-739-2221
- Lake Region Healthcare Fergus Falls Hospital (24 hours): 218-736-8000
- Prairie Ridge Hospital & Health Service Elbow Lake Clinic: 218-685-7300
- Prairie Ridge Hospital & Health Services Morris Clinic: 320-589-4008

*Source: Several data points were derived from this article: <https://medium.com/@ariadnelabs/social-distancing-this-is-not-a-snow-day-ac21d7fa78b4>