



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Macon County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Changing Disease Demographic

COVID-19 has changed the way we live our lives, and even how we live our lives seems to change on an almost daily basis. This constant change is partly because of the way we react to the loosening restrictions on how we go about living our lives. It is also because the COVID-19 virus itself is changing how it affects our health.

Governor Parson's stay at home orders restricted movement within our society for about six weeks. During that time Macon County was fortunate to have few positive COVID-19 cases due in large part to the orders; but, also due in part to how disease spread was contained by policy decisions of civic and government leaders in our community. Now the stay at home orders are lifted and what remains to help prevent the spread of disease are common sense practices of social distancing, hand hygiene, surface sanitization, and masking as appropriate. The public health practice of contact tracing also minimizes risk of disease spread during an outbreak. But people are congregating and traveling more as summer overtakes us. With increased testing of asymptomatic people, our disease demographic is changing. In April the average age of a COVID-19 patient was 56 years. The largest percent of Missourians is under 45 and this age group is returning to social gatherings of work and other events. According to the Missouri Hospital Association, in March COVID-19 patients under 45 years was 23% of cases in Missouri. Now, this group is 63% of new cases and the average age of positive COVID-19 cases are now 38 years.

Boone County cases are mirroring this trend. In a June 30<sup>th</sup> article written by Kyreon Lee and posted by KRCG (Sinclair Broadcasting Group) as of Sunday, 55% of overall Boone County positive cases are in age under 30 years with the highest percentage in the 20-24 age group. According to Columbia/Boone County Public Health Services Assistant Director Scott Clardy, the direct cause is not social distancing. "The issues are just people not social distancing when they should be. Going out together, socializing together, drinking from the same cups, hugging, touching each other. All kinds of things like that that they shouldn't be doing: going out when they're already sick."

More and more younger people are testing positive for the disease. It is important to know that younger people are more resilient to COVID-19. Many of these younger cases are also asymptomatic and they are unknowingly dangerous to our immunocompromised population and those with chronic disease such as diabetes. Young people who don't know they have COVID-19 can easily spread the disease to vulnerable people without realizing it.

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The COVID-19 virus is also changing how it affects a person. This is known as mutating. Whereas in the beginning the main symptoms were fever, cough and shortness of breath, CDC has upgraded symptoms to include sinus congestion, lack of taste and smell, diarrhea, and other symptoms. In Macon County, our last few cases began with sinus congestion, a simple summer cold. How many of us continue living life normally with sinus congestion and being around others? These cases were far from a simple cold with the disease progressing into other symptoms that cause greater sickness. This drives home the importance of staying home when you're sick, and, social distancing when you're out in public, or wearing a mask to protect others from getting the disease even when outdoors.

Even though the stay at home order was lifted, life cannot return to pre-pandemic normal. Businesses need to begin to thrive and people need to be social. In order to keep COVID-19 out of Macon County, or minimize its spread within our community, smart living, social distancing, hand hygiene, sanitizing common touch surfaces, and masking as needed have to be a part of how we go about living for the foreseeable future.

Mike Chambers  
Administrator

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