COVID-19: Know Before You Go
By Dr. Michele Dikkers, Chair of Clayton County Board of Health

The state of Iowa has fewer and fewer restrictions to follow during the current pandemic.

Being a rural state, we have been blessed with fewer cases of COVID-19 than most states. This makes it very easy to forget that we are still vulnerable to the disease. We are tired of being at home and are ready to get back to “normal”. But will we really ever get back to “normal”. Those that study pandemics and disease progressions, know that it is likely for COVID-19 to come in waves and be something we live with for a while.

What do we need to know before we go out? Especially as we watch an increasing number of cases, a second surge beginning, in some states.

Let common sense be your guide. Follow the recommendations from the CDC (updated June 15, 2020).

As we resume daily activities outside our homes, we want to do so as safely as possible. Remembering that the more closely we interact with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

Being aware of the spread of COVID-19 in your community is important. Monitor the state website to know how many cases are in your county and the surrounding counties. If the numbers are climbing, you should be more cautious and consider changing your plans.

Think about how many people will you be interacting with. The more people you interact with raises your risk. Engaging with new people and people that aren’t physically distancing or wearing face masks increases your risk.

Where will you be? Outdoor spaces give you more space and more ventilation. Being outside makes it easier to physically distance. Indoor spaces can be more challenging when it comes to trying to avoid risks.

If you are going to be indoors, use or watch for visual reminders to stay six feet apart. Look for physical barriers such as plexiglass or windows for protection.
Continue to protect yourself by practicing everyday preventive actions. Monitor for symptoms and stay home when you are sick. Avoid touching your face. Wash hands often. Continue to physically distance. Wear masks when you can’t be six feet apart.

Though we need to physically distance, we need to be social. There are many ways to do that. If you are venturing out to be social, remember a few things:

- know your community and if there are active cases by monitoring the state website
- limit your exposure to large groups and to those you are not familiar with
- maintain physical distancing
- wash your hands frequently and/or use hand sanitizer
- wear a mask when in public, particularly when it is difficult to stay six feet away from others consistently

The goal is to stop/slow the spread. Not to bring it home to those we love or to those in a high-risk group. Be safe. Make smart choices and remember, we are all in this together.