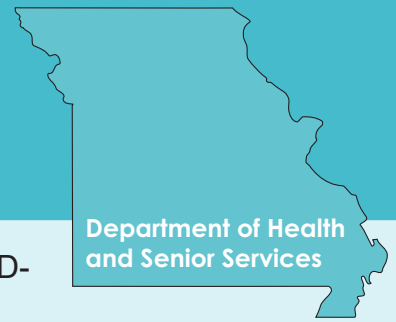


# Recommendations for Rural Communities



While many of Missouri's rural communities have seen few cases of COVID-19 so far, this is no time to let our guard down. Lower case count may be due to lower populations and social distancing being generally easier in our rural areas. It is important to remember that cases lag behind exposure for several days and may not yet have emerged. Many rural areas have the additional vulnerabilities of having an older population, more individuals with chronic health conditions, and limited access to health care. Everyone needs to continue doing all they can to keep the pandemic tamped down. Use good sense and sound judgment. When entering public places, protect yourself and slow the spread of the virus in your hometown.

Persons in rural areas should continue to:

- Stay home if you are ill. Family contacts that have been exposed should also stay home.
- Call or email your doctor/healthcare provider before visiting a hospital or clinic to assure you are visiting only if it's a medical necessity.
- Practice good physical distancing while out in public, maintaining at least 6 foot separation from other persons to limit the spread of the virus. If possible, shop small and shop local to avoid big crowds.
- Have close contact only with people that you have been in contact with since the beginning of the outbreak; those that you know and know where they have been.
- Disinfectant frequently touched surfaces in your vehicle and home after someone has been out in public.
- Consider wearing a face covering in public. The virus is spread through respiratory secretions (including talking and breathing) and wearing a piece of cloth to stop the movement of these particles may help protect your friends and neighbors, just in case you have the virus and are spreading it without knowing it.
- Have just one member of your household, preferably someone already going out in public, do the grocery shopping, pick up prescriptions, and perform other essential tasks.
- Continue to practice good handwashing. Wash your hands after picking up the mail or delivered packages.
- Continue to avoid touching your face or eyes while out in public. If wearing gloves out in public, remember that they can become contaminated too; avoid touching your face with gloves that have touched objects or surfaces in public. Wash and/or sanitize your hands after removing gloves.
- After picking up food at a drive thru, unwrap your food, then wash or sanitize your hands before eating.

For those who find themselves with cabin fever, spring is a beautiful time in rural Missouri. Get out and enjoy the great outdoors. Gardening, hiking, fishing, and hunting are ways to maintain social distancing and improve your physical and mental health during these challenging times.

**For more information: [www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus](http://www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus)**

**Hotline: 877-435-8411**

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