



To protect, nurture and advance  
the health of our community

# ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Linda Conlon, MPH, BAN, RN  
Director/ Health Officer

Marta Koelling, MPH, MS, CHES  
Assistant Director



## ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT COVID-19 FAQ

The Oneida County Public Health Department (OCHD) acknowledges that you may be concerned about the community or yourself related to COVID-19, at this unprecedented time. OCHD has been working with the media, local partners, and community members to answer community questions with the most up to date and accurate information. Below are answers to some questions that have frequently been asked.

- [Should I be wearing a face covering?](#)
- [What is the health department doing when a person who tests positive for COVID-19 is identified?](#)
- [How will I know if I have been in CLOSE contact with someone who has COVID-19?](#)
- [Why hasn't the health department released more information about the people who have tested positive for COVID-19?](#)
- [How does the health department decide what location information will be shared about where someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been?](#)
- [Are people from out of town who tested positive for COVID-19 while in our community counted in our county numbers?](#)
- [What is happening with antibody \(or serology\) testing?](#)
- [How many people have been tested in Oneida County?](#)
- [Why does the health department continue to have pending cases every day?](#)
- [Why is the health department still counting positive cases if they have already been released from isolation?](#)
- [Why is the health department posting about people who tested positive for COVID-19 and are now off isolation instead of people who tested positive and are now recovered from COVID-19? What is the difference?](#)
- [Can I get COVID-19 from going to local restaurants and businesses that are open?](#)
- [What does the health department do to make sure that the local restaurants and businesses that are open are safe?](#)
- [What if I have more questions about COVID-19?](#)

### 1. Should I be wearing a face covering?

Yes\*\*, according to the CDC, cloth face coverings should be worn in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and gas stations.

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Studies and evidence on infection control report that these droplets usually travel around 6 feet

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

(about two arms lengths). While people who are sick or know that they have COVID-19 should isolate at home, COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have symptoms and do not know that they are infected. That's why it's important for everyone to practice social distancing and wear cloth face coverings in public settings. Cloth face coverings provide an extra layer to help prevent the respiratory droplets from traveling in the air and onto other people.

Be Kind: your face covering protects me and mine protects you.

\*\*People older than 2 years of age in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to do maintain should wear a face covering. Children under age 2 and anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance should NOT wear a face covering.

[Return to Top](#)

## **2. What is the health department doing when a person who tests positive for COVID-19 is identified?**

When an individual is identified as having COVID-19, OCHD works to determine all of the people that person may have had CLOSE contact with for more than a few minutes. OCHD then contacts all of those people keeping the identity of the positive case confidential, asks about symptoms, and requires isolation or quarantine for each person. If any of those people are identified to have symptoms themselves, OCHD will then work to determine all of the people that this new person may have had CLOSE contact with for more than a few minutes, then get in touch with those people, and so on and so forth. This is called contact tracing and OCHD has experience doing this sort of work with other communicable diseases in the community.

[Return to Top](#)

## **3. How will I know if I have been in CLOSE contact with someone who has COVID-19?**

OCHD will contact anyone who has been identified as having CLOSE contact for more than a few minutes with any person with confirmed COVID-19.

It is important to remember though that Oneida County has identified community spread. This means that EVERYONE, even people who have not traveled outside of their community, should minimize their contact with others by staying home when possible, practicing social distancing, wearing cloth face coverings, and being alert for symptoms of COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

## **4. Why hasn't the health department released more information about the people who have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Following the HIPAA Privacy Rule and Wisconsin law, OCHD is subject to the "minimum necessary" rule. Even during this time of pandemic, OCHD must follow applicable laws and standards of ethical conduct.

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

Additionally, with Oneida County being such a small, close knit community, it is important to maintain the privacy of everyone. If too much information is given out, positive individuals may be able to be identified and targeted by other community members putting them at risk for bullying or violence. As Governor Evers stated in his April 10 Media Briefing, "this illness is what we are up against, not each other."

Shortly after the first person in Oneida County tested positive for COVID-19, OCHD assured the community that if there was a concern of known COVID-19 exposure related to a public place, that information would be shared. With the increased movement of people at this time, OCHD will begin to share more information about the public places people who have tested positive for COVID-19 have been during their time of communicability **if the time spent there could have resulted in a SIGNIFICANT exposure for others** (CDC says at least 15 minutes of close contact). This is not intended to lay blame on anyone who tests positive (people may not have symptoms during their period of communicability and may not know they are sick), any local businesses, or other locations identified. It is meant to allow the public to better know their potential risk of being previously exposed to someone who has tested positive. As people move about more, tracing all contacts becomes increasingly more difficult. In situations in which someone who has tested positive and has been out in public, it may be up to the community to identify if they should be tested based on if they have been to the same places as the person who tested positive on the same dates. It is important for everyone to continue to be diligent as people without symptoms can spread the virus and may be visiting the same places as you are.

[Return to Top](#)

#### **5. How does the health department decide what location information will be shared about where someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been?**

The Oneida County Health Department will only be sharing location information about where someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been if:

- The person who tested positive for COVID-19 was out in public during their potential time of communicability **AND**
- The time the person who tested positive for COVID-19 spent out in public could have resulted in a significant exposure for others who are unable to be identified via normal contact tracing.

According to the CDC, factors to consider for defining exposure include proximity, duration of the exposure (longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), whether the individual has symptoms (coughing likely increases exposure risk) and whether the individual was wearing a facemask (which can effectively block respiratory secretions from contaminating others and the environment). Recommendations vary on the length of time of exposure but 15 min of close exposure can be used as an operational definition. Because of this information eating at a restaurant where patrons may not be wearing masks and are sitting near others for a longer duration of time may pose a greater risk than shopping at a grocery store in which people are not often in close contact with the same person for greater than 15 minutes.

Please also be aware OCHD will work closely with all businesses in which a potentially significant exposure (from a patron or otherwise) may have occurred in order to assure that appropriate cleaning continues to happen and other preventive practices are also in place. Additionally, the OCHD may recommend that staff monitor for symptoms and/or be tested for COVID-19. The goal of OCHD is to assure the health and safety of the community, including anyone who may be exposed.

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

If someone is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or has been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (confirmed contact or based on public locations someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been), they should contact their medical provider to be tested.

[Return to Top](#)

## **6. Are people from out of town who tested positive for COVID-19 while in our community counted in our county numbers?**

For the most part, people who test positive for COVID-19 will be counted in numbers for their home county, not necessarily Oneida County. This reporting follows Wisconsin State Statute 252 and Wisconsin Admin Code ch DHS 145, which outlines who must be communicated with, when, and how.

The OCHD is, however, working with local providers to gather information about people from out of town who test positive for COVID-19 while in our community to determine what follow up may need to happen locally and to get a better understanding of the prevalence of COVID-19 in the area.

OCHD can only report and respond to the information that we have and right now we only have information about county residents.

Because our picture may actually be incomplete, we encourage everyone to be following simple precautions like staying home as much as possible, practicing physical distancing, wearing face coverings, using good hand hygiene and following enhanced cleaning practices. We know that COVID-19 is prevalent in other communities around the state and nation and with increased travel, it is reasonable to believe that COVID-19 may be more prevalent in our community than what just the local data reflects.

OCHD will not be double counting cases reported elsewhere.

[Return to Top](#)

## **7. What is happening with antibody (or serology) testing?**

As more labs around the country begin doing antibody testing, it is important to note a few things:

- Except in limited situations, antibody tests should not play a role in making a diagnosis of COVID-19. Antibody tests have a low sensitivity in early infection, which makes antibody testing unhelpful in ruling out COVID-19 in people with symptoms.
- The accuracy of antibody tests is variable (false negatives and false positives may occur), and the results should be interpreted with caution.
- It is not currently known whether or to what degree the presence of antibodies offers protection from future infection. It is also not currently known if and/or when antibodies are formed in the body.

All positive COVID-19 antibody test results are required to be reported to the local health department by the provider or lab conducting the test. The Oneida County Health Department will follow up with everyone who has a positive antibody test result to discuss additional testing, symptoms, contacts, etc.

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

The Oneida County Health Department will begin reporting on positive antibody tests in the daily data updates, however this number will not be included in the total number tested or number confirmed. This is because the Oneida County Health Department will not be informed of all antibody tests completed, just positive results and positive antibody results should not be used to diagnose active COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

### **8. How many people have been tested in Oneida County?**

The Oneida County Health Department releases testing data (including total tests, pending tests, negative tests, and positive tests) on our Facebook page Monday through Friday.

One key consideration in this data reflects the number of tests completed, not individuals tested; an individual may be tested more than one time.

[Return to Top](#)

### **9. Why does the health department continue to have pending cases every day?**

The pending results continue to cycle through. For example, those who were pending last Friday have received results back and a new batch of tests are pending results. At this point it takes anywhere from a few hours to 2-3 days to get results back (depending on the lab and/or priority). We are posting our county results Monday through Friday on our Facebook page.

[Return to Top](#)

### **10. Why is the health department still counting positive cases if they have already been released from isolation?**

The Oneida County Health Department is reporting data following common disease epidemiology; reporting incidence, prevalence, and total affected or cumulative cases of COVID-19.

Incidence refers to all new cases in a given timeframe (e.g. the number of new people who test positive on a single day).

Prevalence refers to the people who have the disease at any one point in time (e.g. the number of people currently in self isolation or hospitalized).

Total affected or cumulative refers to the total number of cases for a specific time *interval* (e.g. the total number of people who ever tested positive in Oneida County).

The Oneida County Health Department has been reporting on all three types of data in the daily case counts Monday through Friday, and will continue to do so as it provides important situational awareness related to COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhinelander, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

**11. Why is the health department posting about people who tested positive for COVID-19 and are now off isolation instead of people who tested positive and are now recovered from COVID-19? What is the difference?**

There is currently not a consistent definition across jurisdictions for “recovered.” At the beginning of the outbreak, people who tested positive for COVID-19 may have been receiving follow up testing to confirm a negative result before being called “recovered,” however, this follow up testing is no longer common practice. People who test positive for COVID-19 are allowed to be off of isolation when at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 3 days have passed without a fever (without the use of fever reducing medications) and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath).

It is important to note that in other parts of the country and world, some people who have tested positive for COVID-19 have seen improvement in their symptoms but have then taken a turn for the worse, thus recovery is difficult to define.

The majority of people who get this illness will recover though.

[Return to Top](#)

**12. Can I get COVID-19 from going to local restaurants and businesses that are open?**

According to the CDC and the FDA, there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through food or food packaging. As usual, before preparing or handling food, you should always wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Also, the CDC states that money is not likely a primary mode of transmission of COVID-19, however, it may be possible to transfer the virus by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. Customers and workers are encouraged to properly wash their hands often throughout the day, including after handling money, and always before they eat or touch their eyes, nose, and mouth.

The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, however it may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

With community spread, all Oneida County residents should be staying home as much as possible, minimizing their contact with others, and being alert for symptoms of COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

**13. What does the health department do to make sure that the local restaurants and businesses that are open are safe?**

OCHD continues to work with businesses throughout the county to assure that precautions are followed in order to protect the safety of the community. Businesses should be following enhanced cleaning practices, excluding ill

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*

individuals from work, using appropriate hand hygiene, and limiting direct customer contact through various physical distancing measures.

If a local business has an employee who tested positive for COVID-19 and worked while contagious they must follow CDC guidance for cleaning the facility. This includes closing off the areas the employee worked, and not reopening these areas until the CDC guidelines have been completed.

Again, it is important to remember that with community spread, all Oneida County residents should be staying home as much as possible, minimizing their contact with others, and being alert for symptoms of COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

#### **14. What if I have more questions about COVID-19?**

This is a rapidly evolving situation. This is what we know now, and information may change. To read the latest information about COVID-19 check the Oneida County Health Department website ([oneidacountypublichealth.org](http://oneidacountypublichealth.org)) or Facebook page ([facebook.com/OneidaCountyHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/OneidaCountyHealthDepartment/)), the Department of Health Services (DHS) website (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>).

[Return to Top](#)

---

Phone: (715) 369-6111  
Fax: (715) 369-6112  
ochd@co.oneida.wi.us  
[www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org](http://www.OneidaCountyPublicHealth.org)

100 W. Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

*Embracing change, partnerships, and best practices to lead  
Oneida County to a healthy future.*