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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Letter from Your Henry County Health Department

Napoleon, OH– These past six months have been extremely trying for all of us due to COVID-19. We've had to stay home, start wearing masks, distancing ourselves from others, and learn to practice every day life in a new way. At the start of this pandemic, our county was extremely lucky. We didn't see our hospital being overwhelmed or the large number of cases that happened in big cities. However, since July Henry County's COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have continued to rise. COVID-19 has become more real to our tight-knit community. We've had community members pass away, residents in hospitals, individuals who have gotten very sick, people who have had mild illness, and workers, students, and others being quarantined after exposure to someone with COVID-19.

Many of us feel that we've done all that we should and followed all the rules, so when does this end? As the health agency for the county, we'd love to be able to answer that for you but unfortunately we don't know either. What we do know is that by working all together we can lessen the toll COVID-19 takes on our community.

We've gotten a lot of questions, complaints, and objections to quarantine. The truth is, we don't like to quarantine anyone more than you do. However, it is necessary if we want to stop the spread of disease in our community. These quarantine standards, set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health, must be followed by the department and are crucial to stopping the spread of COVID-19. However, we don't do it just because they are standards issued by higher up agencies. We follow them because we care about our community. The reality is a person can spread the virus before they know they are sick. Symptoms of COVID-19 can appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Just in Henry County alone, our nurses have seen cases start showing symptoms on day 13 or 14 after exposure. If we don't quarantine, one person could be the reason someone becomes seriously ill, hospitalized or worse. They could spread it to a family member who has a serious heart condition, a friend who has severe asthma, a coach who has diabetes, or their mom who is expecting their new sibling without even knowing they are sick.

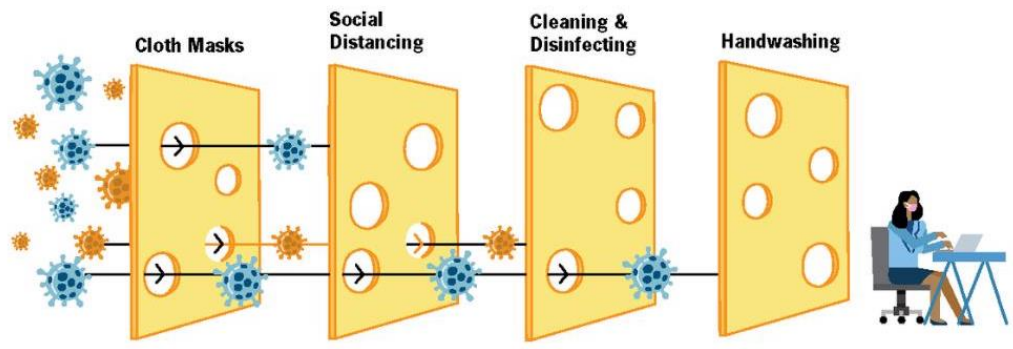
Many have asked "What if I get a COVID test during my quarantine period and it comes back negative? Do I have to continue my 14 day quarantine?" Short answer. Yes, you still have to finish your 14 day quarantine period.

The test result only means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing. It is a snapshot in time. Many might think that this suggests a poor test, but that's not the case. The test is dependent on the amount of virus present in the specimen at the time of collection. You could still be infected with COVID-19 and test negative because your levels are too low to be detected by the test or you are too early in the course of your illness for a positive test. Because symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure, you could test negative on day 4 of

quarantine, while the virus is still reproducing in the body, and then test positive on day 7 when there is enough virus particles in the specimen. If we didn't follow the 14 day quarantine and went just by negative testing, someone who is early in their illness could infect many more people without even knowing it.

Others have said "But I was wearing a mask, why do I still have to quarantine?" Wearing a mask does not change the quarantine protocols. An individual is considered a close contact of a case if they are within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more and must be quarantined to help prevent the spread of disease. This is irrespective of mask wearing by the person exposed and/or the individual with COVID-19.

Some people have challenged mask wearing by saying "So what's the point of wearing a mask when we are doing all the other things to stay healthy?" Wearing a mask is one layer of protection to keep individuals safe from COVID-19. Think of all the prevention steps as pieces of Swiss cheese with different holes. Each piece doesn't 100% cover you from being infected with COVID-19 because they have their weaknesses, represented by the holes in a single piece of cheese. However, when you use all of them collectively and consistently, the weakness of any single layer of protection is offset by the strengths of another layer of protection. So just like layering pieces of Swiss cheese, the weaknesses or holes, are covered by another piece or protective measure. The more protection layers we use the better everyone is protected from illness. This is why it's so very important that every person, school district, business, restaurant, event, and gathering follow all the prevention steps to stop the spread of COVID-19.



James Reason, Ph.D.'s "Swiss Cheese Model" from the Cleveland Clinic's Return to Work Amid COVID-19 Paper

We've been your health department for over 100 years, working to protect you, your family, friends, and every single resident from all types of diseases, environmental hazards, and unsafe or unhealthy things. Our goal has always been to protect against diseases, prevent injuries, and promote health. That has not changed. We're doing our very best to protect every resident in this county the best way we can with all the information we have.

We are begging you to do your part to stop the spread of COVID-19. We ALL want to go back to normal but we won't be able to do that unless we work together. Please continue wearing your mask, practicing social distancing (6 feet apart from others not in your household), washing hands often, and staying home when sick. We are all on the same team. We can do this Henry County.

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