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5:30PM CT on April 20, 2020

CDC Resources for Coronavirus (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

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Media Release:

Gov. Ricketts, Public Health Director Announce Guidelines to Resume Elective Surgeries in May

Gov. Ricketts (podium) and Public Health Director Dr. Gary Anthone (far left)

at today's press briefing.

Watch the video by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fq7u2zaaus1bj2qs%2FPress%2520Conf%25204.20.20.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov%

Governor Press Release 4-20 - SPANISH.pdf (/sites/governor.nebraska.gov/files/doc/press/Governor%20Press%20Release%204-20%20-%20SPANISH.pdf)

LINCOLN – This afternoon, Governor Pete Ricketts announced the State's first step to relax the health measures implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19. Starting on May 4th, elective surgeries may resume as long as hospitals and healthcare facilities meet requirements for available bed capacity and have adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Additionally, the Governor announced that the State is giving greater authority to healthcare providers to conduct tests for COVID-19. As the State expands capacity to perform tests, healthcare providers can now choose to test a broader range of patients.

The State's Public Health Director, Dr. Gary Anthone, joined the Governor at today's briefing. He talked about the elevated risk that COVID-19 poses to smokers. He urged Nebraskans to quit smoking in order to lower the likelihood of medical complications due to COVID-19.

Gov. Ricketts: 21 Days to Keep Nebraska Healthy

- We are now on Day 11 of the "21 Days to Stay Home and Stay Healthy" campaign.
- I want to remind people of our Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy.
    - Stay home. No non-essential errands and no social gatherings. Respect the ten-person limit.
    - Socially distance your work. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
    - Shop alone and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
    - Help kids follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports. And no playgrounds.
    - Help seniors stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.
    - Exercise daily at home or with an appropriately socially-distanced activity.

Gov. Ricketts: Elective Surgeries

- Today, the State will issue a new Directed Health Measure to allow elective surgeries to resume on May 4th under certain guidelines.
    - Hospitals can resume elective surgeries if they maintain 30% general bed availability, 30% ICU bed availability, 30% ventilator availability, AND have a two-week supply of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) in their specific facility.
    - Procedural guidelines for resuming elective procedures will be at the discretion of the hospital or health clinic.
- The State has been successfully procuring PPE to deliver resources to hospitals across the state through our local public health districts.
- We have a procurement team and a distribution team tracking requests and delivering items daily.

Gov. Ricketts: Expanded Testing

- The Department of Health and Human Services is issuing a new Health Action Network alert to healthcare providers across the state.
- This alert will expand the grounds for testing.
- It will give healthcare providers greater discretion to decide when a test should be performed.
- I want to thank everyone in the Public Health Lab and at all of our testing facilities who has helped to make this happen.
- We continue to push to expand testing even further.

Dr. Anthone: Smoking and the Risk of COVID-19

- We all know how serious COVID-19 can be. It's an even more serious threat for those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape.
- When people inhale combustible products with chemicals, it causes inflammation in the lung airway passages and can lead to severe injury.
- When you add that effect to a viral load in the lungs, it can be devastating.
- Among people with COVID-19, a recent study shows that those who smoke are two-and-a-half times more likely to get severe symptoms than those who do not smoke. This holds true for cigarette and marijuana smoking, as well as vaping.
- Smokers are already at higher risk of lung disease and have decreased lung capacity. For these reasons, smokers who get COVID-19 are more likely to need to go on a ventilator and to stay on one.
- In my forty years as a surgeon, we always counseled patients to discontinue smoking prior to an elective surgery to decrease the risk of pulmonary complications.
- Studies show that stopping smoking for even two weeks can make a difference in your body's ability to recover from surgery or fight an illness.
- As we go through the pandemic, it's important for Nebraskans to be aware of the enhanced risks for those who smoke.
- For Nebraskans who are ready to stop smoking or vaping, the Nebraska Quitline can provide help and support: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

Full video of today's press briefing is available by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fq7u2zaaus1bj2qs%2FPress%2520Conf%25204.20.20.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov%

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