![The Hospital Cooperative logo: THC]

August 11, 2020

The 17-member hospitals of The Hospital Cooperative (Co-op) have dedicated numerous hours caring for those affected by COVID-19. After observing the spread of COVID-19 in the region, it is clear that wearing a mask helps prevent the transmission of COVID-19 along with physical distancing and handwashing. **It is our position that everyone should wear a protective facemask when out in public, consistent with CDC guidelines.**

While our primary focus is health care, we are also community members who want to see our local economy and school districts thrive. We understand the significant hardship lockdowns have on local businesses, and the impact school closures have on our children and families. We want to avoid lockdowns and focus on practical solutions.

Masking has been proven to significantly slow the spread of COVID-19. It is as simple as that. The choice is ours; wear masks, slow the spread, keep businesses open and give our schools the best possible environment for re-opening, or do nothing while COVID-19 sweeps through our communities.

Researchers from hospitals, universities, the private sector, and government agencies have concluded that masks could be one of the most powerful and cost-effective tools to stop COVID-19 and accelerate the economic recovery. There is universal agreement, however, that masking alone will not be enough to stop the pandemic. Masking is most effective when combined with physical distancing, frequent handwashing, testing, and coordinated contact tracing.

At the Co-op hospitals throughout East Idaho and West Wyoming, we stand united and our employees and visitors will be wearing masks. We hope you will join us.