

Local & State

Where Oregon stands, three months into the pandemic

Editor's Note: This article was originally published by Oregon Public Broadcasting, one of more than a dozen news organizations throughout the state, including the Baker City Herald, sharing their coverage of the novel coronavirus outbreak to help inform Oregonians about this evolving health issue.

By Erin Ross
Oregon Public Broadcasting

It's been three months since Oregon's social-distancing and stay-home orders came down in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Especially with the recent caseload spike and Gov. Kate Brown's order to pause reopening, sometimes it feels like nothing will be like it was before.

People have been wishing family members a happy birthday through a window, eating out on mostly empty restaurant patios, or going to protests in masks.

The science around COVID-19 is changing so fast that even the valid-but-evolving research findings seem to blend in with the misinformation coming in from all sides. So we wanted to answer some of your questions, update you on the latest science, and answer everyone's top question: When can I get a hug again?

Reopening is inherently dangerous. The more people mix at work, church or socially, the more transmission there will be, and there's no way around it. That's why Oregon's reopening plan relies on testing and contact tracing, say state health officials. And it's Brown's reason for hitting pause on any further decisions to reopen.

Assume every stranger could get you sick, and assume that even if you feel fine, you could give the virus to everyone you meet.

Is this going to last forever?

We have no idea, but the pandemic is going to last for a long time. And it's going to be uncertain for a long time. In one of the most widely read and cited articles of the pandemic, Tomas Pueyo described reopening as the "hammer and dance." First, we shut everything down to stop the initial spread. That's the "hammer." And now we're in the "dance."

Health officials and counties and the state will watch case numbers, and they'll roll back some aspects of reopening if cases increase. And then once they decrease, reopen again.

Unless other plans are raised, that dance will continue until we get a vaccine, and the U.S. is paying five manufacturers to start producing the vaccines now, in the hopes that if one works, they can start deploying it immediately. The U.S. plans to have 300 million vaccine doses stockpiled by Jan. 1, 2021, so if everything goes well, it's possible we could start vaccinating next spring. But first, we need to prove the vaccines work.

What's the latest on whether you can get COVID-19 from surfaces?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently said they have found that this virus is primarily spread from person to person, and is unlikely to be spread on surfaces. They cited a handful of studies that suggest COVID-19 may not survive very long on most



Don Shrubshell / TNS

household surfaces.

But other studies have found the opposite, and some that have found the virus can survive for days. Scientists pushed back against the CDC's statement, and the next day the CDC updated their page again to clarify that guidance hadn't changed: person-to-person contact is the primary driver, but you should still assume you can catch COVID-19 from surfaces.

Wash your hands, clean doorknobs, countertops and other frequently-touched areas regularly. If taking extra measures like wearing gloves and sanitizing packages makes you feel safe, you shouldn't feel bad about doing that.

What are scientists saying now about the asymptomatic spread of COVID-19?

Official opinions on the asymptomatic spread of COVID-19 have flip-flopped so many times it could make your head spin. It was a rumor, then the gospel, then a conspiracy theory, and gospel again — until the World Health Organization put out a press release in early June saying asymptomatic spread was "very rare."

Again, scientists pushed back, citing valid studies. Even Fauci said they were wrong. The WHO went into damage-control mode. Its updated statement says that asymptomatic spread can occur, but it's still unclear how much it drives infections.

Should we still think of COVID-19 as mostly a risk for people who are older or have underlying conditions?

Since the early days of the pandemic, we've learned that everyone is at some risk, and even young, active, healthy people can get seriously ill or even die from the disease. The main symptoms are still the same: a dry cough, difficulty breathing, and fever.

But now, we know it might cause a number of other conditions. It's causing blood clots in young, healthy people. Scientists think it's responsible for a rise in "multisystem inflammatory syndrome," a rare disease that occurs in children after a viral illness. Doctors are studying "covid toes."

Other people — people who weren't even sick enough to get hospitalized — say they're still feeling the impacts of COVID-19 months later. One thing hasn't changed: This virus is nasty and you do not want to get it.

all monolith, but in real-time, science can be vague and is subject to change. Right now, science is happening at a record-breaking speed, and researchers are studying something they've never seen before. The rise-and-fall of hydroxychloroquine as a miracle cure is one example.

Changing your hypothesis in the face of new information is an integral part of science, but it's not something we're accustomed to doing when we conduct our daily lives. In science, figuring out you were wrong is just another type of learning. It doesn't mean the research wasn't good, or the scientists messed up: we just learned a lot more about how COVID-19 works.

As new studies are done and new information comes in, recommendations will change. A lot. And often. Staying on top of them can be hard, but the basics will always be the same: Just try to be safe.

Summer is almost here. What's the latest on how I can hike/bike/camp/etc. responsibly?

Meeting up with friends outside is a lot safer than meeting up inside, but that doesn't mean you should stop social distancing. If you're planning a vacation or a hike, try to plan one closer to home: If there's an outbreak in your area, you don't want to bring it to a new one or vice-versa. Remember that while some counties might be "open," towns might have older residents, or might not have enough hospital beds to handle a big outbreak.

If you're traveling, try to bring all of your supplies with you, so you don't need to stop in local grocery stores and potentially infect yourself or others. Be aware of any outbreaks in the area around you, and if there's one in your community, don't travel.

If you're outside, you're expected to keep a 6-foot distance from other people, wear a mask, or both.

See COVID-19 / Page 6A

School board to meet

By Chris Collins
collins@bakercityherald.com

The Baker School Board's Thursday night session will begin with a budget hearing at 5:45 p.m. to consider the District's 2020-21 annual budget.

The Board is expected to adopt the budget later in the meeting.

The meeting will be convened through the Zoom video application. More information about how to participate is available by calling the District Office at 541-524-2260.

The Board's regular session will begin at 6 p.m. Superintendent Mark Witty is expected to update the Board on the Oregon Department of Education's Plan for reopening schools in the fall, the Baker Early Learning Center project in the former North Baker

School Building, state revenue, negotiations and the status of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

The meeting will get underway with the recognition of Promise Students of the Month: Rebecca "Becky" Snyder of Haines Elementary and Ashlyn Dalton of Baker Middle School. These retiring classified employees also will be honored: Tony Rudolph of the maintenance department, and Debra White, head cook at Brooklyn Primary School.

Parent representatives, Jessica Dougherty, who volunteers in the District, and Eموke Marvin, a parent who also works as Brooklyn Primary School secretary, will speak on the topic of "Distance Learning: What's Working For Our Families."

LOCAL BRIEFING

Elkhorn Lanes bowling alley reopens

Elkhorn Lanes, Baker City's bowling alley, has opened its lanes for the first time since it was closed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The bowling alley at 3335 10th St. opened on June 6, but manager Shane Blair said the business hasn't been as busy as it was before COVID-19 hit.

"There have been a lot less people," Blair said.

Although he doesn't think the alley has been turning a profit so far, he said it's been good to see people laughing and having fun and that having a little business was still better than being closed.

The recent rainy weather has been beneficial since people are more likely to choose indoor activities when it's soggy outside. "We do a little rain dance to get people in," Blair said.

— Sam Anthony, Baker City Herald

Baker County Democrats to meet by teleconference on Thursday evening

The Baker County Democrats will not be meeting at their usual location until September. Their June meeting will be done by teleconference on June 18 at 6 p.m. Anyone wishing to join can call Peter Hall at 541-519-7274 for call-in information.

BURGLARY

Continued from Page 1A

The restaurant, most recently known as The New China Cafe, shut down before Gov. Kate Brown's March 23 order requiring nonessential businesses, including restaurants and bars, to offer takeout or delivery service only.

Baker County was among counties whose businesses were allowed to begin reopening in mid-May with some restrictions. Phase 2, which expanded those reopenings further, began on June 6. The Chinese restaurant and bar have remained closed.

Police Chief Ray Duman said the Oregon Liquor Control Commission had scheduled a revocation hearing for May in regard to terminating the liquor license at the Rising Sun Palace and Sunset Lounge based on numerous alcohol-related incidents at the business. Instead, Wong surrendered his liquor license on May 22, Marc Calvert of Pendleton, OLCC district inspector, told Duman.

The future of the building and businesses is unknown, Duman said.

"So much of who we are is where we have been."

Baker Valley Travel (541) 523-9353

New Name. Same Great Team. Same Exceptional Service.

Travis T. Hampton, D.P.M.
Foot and Ankle Surgeon

La Grande 1408 N Hall Street
Enterprise 601 Medical Parkway
Baker 3175 Pocahontas Rd.

GRANITE VIEW
Foot & Ankle

541-963-0265
888-843-9090
www.GVfoot.com

TREAT DAD TO THE BEST

Father's Day Special
Open 12 Noon
Prime Rib Dinner
with triple chocolate truffle mousse.
Includes salad bar.
Also featuring regular menu items

**Open for dinner: M-W-Th-F at 4:30 pm
Saturday - 3:30 • Closed Tuesday
Open by reservation for private parties**

541-856-3639
10 miles north of Baker City on Hwy 30, in Haines, Oregon.
www.hainessteakhouse.com