

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is an infection spreading around the globe that is currently or will soon be in our area. Symptoms of COVID-19 include cough, fever and shortness of breath. While children can catch COVID-19, it seems that most do not experience severe symptoms. The majority of severe illnesses and deaths seem to be occurring in those older than 60 and/or people of any age with conditions that weaken the immune system such as asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. There is no reason to panic but educating yourself and preparing in advance will decrease your chances of getting sick. We are here to help and encourage you to reach out with any questions.

How do I decrease my chances of getting COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent the coronavirus. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. It is also a good idea to wash with soap and water at the first available opportunity.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (cell phones, doorknobs, etc.) using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Wash hands afterwards.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

What if I think I have the virus?

If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms including fever, cough or shortness of breath, call your doctor's office first. Do NOT come to our office or go to urgent care or the ER unless you have severe symptoms that require a call to 911. Testing for coronavirus is currently very limited and mostly being used in hospitalized patients. We anticipate the availability of testing to improve in the coming weeks. Most who get the virus can self-quarantine for two weeks and treat the symptoms with common over the counter cold medications. Those at higher risk for a severe infection

may need evaluation at urgent care or the emergency room. Our office is NOT equipped with the required personal protective equipment to evaluate you if you may have the coronavirus. Our role during this pandemic will be to assist you in triage and continue to treat those not infected with the virus that require other medical care.

What are we doing to prepare?

We have already ordered medications equivalent to what we would have ordered over the next six months in anticipation of a possible shortage of medications. We are staying up to date with information being released by the CDC and WHO. We anticipate that cases will appear locally and quarantines will be enacted temporarily closing schools and businesses. We have begun changing our activities both in our personal and professional lives to decrease our risk of exposure. We are doing all we can to avoid exposure that would require us to self-quarantine for two weeks and not be available to care for you. We anticipate that we may need to transition to more visits via telehealth (phone/video) and/or reschedule some chronic care / well visits. We will continue to keep you updated as conditions change.

What can you do?

- Don't panic
- Educate yourself by following the local news and information released by the CDC
- Prepare by planning for possible quarantine – have an ample amount of medications, food, and basic supplies
- If you have been exposed or have symptoms, call us (do NOT just walk in)
- Decrease exposures now. While everyone should consider this step, this is particularly important for those with weakened immune systems or older than 60.

- Consider...

-avoiding large gatherings and other group events

-shopping for groceries or other items weekly rather than every few days

-getting take-out rather than eating in the restaurant

Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

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