

March 10, 2020

Dear Local Health Improvement Coalition Members:

As efforts regarding COVID-19, also known as coronavirus continue, I want to provide you with an update on our local efforts. We continue to actively work with Maryland Department of Health, Howard County General Hospital, Howard County Public School System, and Howard County Government. I again want to take this opportunity to provide guidance on how best to prevent the spread of this virus. The Health Department recommends calm and the continued use of prevention and preparation strategies to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that older adults and people with severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung, or kidney disease seem to be at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness. If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease. Below are things you can do to help protect you, your family and the community.

Actions You Can Take to Reduce the Risk of Getting Sick with COVID-19 or other viruses

Personally:

- Stay home when sick
- Use good cough etiquette (cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; or cough/sneeze into your elbow)
- Wash hands frequently (or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Get a flu shot
- Older adults and others with underlying health issues should avoid situations that put them at increased risk for more severe disease, like large group gatherings. Talk with your healthcare provider prior to travel and avoid traveling if you are sick.
- Avoid contact with individuals who are sick.

Community-wide:

- Use social distancing when needed. (Increase the distance between people in places where people commonly come into close contact)

Environmentally:

- Clean frequently touched surfaces daily using soap & water or any disinfectant with a label that says "EPA approved" for killing bacteria and viruses

What You Can Do to Prepare Should You Need to Stay Home Because You Are Sick, or You are Caring for Someone Who Is Sick

Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

- Have an adequate supply of nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, which could include pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluid with electrolytes and vitamins
- Check your regular prescription drugs to make sure you have an adequate supply; refill your prescriptions if needed
- Have a thermometer, tissues and hand sanitizer
- Have a two-week supply of food available at home

What to Do If You Think You Might Be Sick

The Health Department has set up a number to call if you have questions or you think you might be sick. Call us at **410-313-6284** (M-F 8:00am-5:00pm) with any questions about the Coronavirus. If you are sick, call your health care provider **BEFORE** you go into the office. If you have a medical emergency after hours call 911.

Where to go For Information About COVID-19

In addition to practicing the prevention and preparedness tips discussed, it is important that community members stay informed and only get information from trusted, official sources.

- For more information about COVID-19, visit our website at www.hchealth.org, as well as the Maryland Department of Health <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov. You can also contact the HCHD at 410-313-6284.
- For information about COVID-19 and travel, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel page <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- For information about coronavirus and high risk groups, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

I am thankful to all of you for your continued dedication to the health of our community.

Maura



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