

## **This message is from Southwestern Public Health, as of March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Because of COVID-19, or coronavirus, we all need to make some changes in our lives that may be hard. But we need everyone in Ontario to do this so that we can help keep each other safe and healthy.

### **Here are the things that we need EVERYONE to do right now, even if you feel well:**

- Keep yourself apart from others that don't live with you. This will help to stop more people from getting sick.
- Keep at least 6 feet or 2 meters from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs
- Limit the number of times you leave your home, and leave only when it is essential to do so, like going to the doctor or to get groceries
- Try to get groceries and essential errands at less busy times
- Avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces
- You may go for a walk in your neighborhood or park while maintaining distance from others of 6 feet or 2 meters
- Wash or sanitize your hands often, especially after touching communal surfaces, like door handles

All schools in Ontario have been instructed to close. No schools can be open. Churches have also been closed. We are not allowed to get together for church, no matter how many people are there. Everything is cancelled where groups of people would be gathering. This includes weddings, funerals, conferences, community events, churches and family gatherings. Instead, what you can do is see if sharing can be done over the phone, video, WhatsApp, or some other way. If you must have an event that cannot be avoided, such as a funeral, please be careful, wash your hands, and always stay 6 feet/2 meters apart from others, as difficult as that may be. You may call Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 x 9 to get advice about how to do this as safely as possible. The only places that are allowed to be open at this time are those that are included in the list of essential services. Any service that is not included in the list of essential services must close effective immediately. The list of essential services can be found online at [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca)

### **Social Distancing: What does it mean?**

Social distancing is a step to limit the number of people you come into close contact with, to reduce the risk of getting sick. This means do not stand close to anyone else by keeping at least 6 feet/2 meters away from others when out in public or common areas, like office buildings, grocery stores or waiting in lines.

### **Self-isolating when you or someone in your home is sick:**

- Stay home: Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and are able to recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care
- Stay in touch with your doctor. Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you have trouble breathing, or if you think it is an emergency
- Separate yourself from other people in your home, in another room if possible or at least 6 feet/2 meters apart
- As much as possible, you should stay away from others. You should stay in a specific "sick room" if possible, and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available
- During a public health emergency, facemasks may be reserved for healthcare workers. For home purposes, you may need to improvise a facemask using a scarf or handkerchief, and wash often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and immediately wash your hands afterward for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food

- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry
- Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid sharing personal household items! Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home
- After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water or put in the dishwasher or washing machine
- Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day! If possible, try to stay in a separate room and consider it a “sick room” and clean the “sick room” and bathroom every day; let someone else clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in other areas of the home
- High-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, and light switches
- If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect a sick person’s bedroom or bathroom, they should do so on an as-needed basis. The caregiver/other person should wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom

#### When to Seek Medical Attention

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

**NOTE: THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THERE WILL BE NO FEES FOR COVID-19 RELATED MEDICAL CARE FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE OHIP. THAT MEANS, EVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A HEALTH CARD, IF YOU NEED TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE BECAUSE OF A COVID-19 RELATED ILLNESS, YOU WILL NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR THE MEDICAL CARE YOU RECEIVE.**

#### **Travelling: We are NOT allowed to travel outside of the country at this time**

The Government of Canada recently **announced an Emergency Order** under the Quarantine Act that means anyone entering Canada by air, sea or land **MUST** self-isolate for 14 days whether or not they have symptoms of COVID-19.

That means, if you travelled outside of Canada, when you come back, you and everyone that you were travelling with need to stay home for 14 days and watch for symptoms of sickness. This means that you do **not** go to a grocery store, friends’ or families’ houses on your way there or back. Go straight home and if you need something, like groceries, ask someone to bring them to your house and drop them off outside. You can pick them up once they have left and then wash your hands. Stay in your home or yard with the people that live in your house for 14 days and do not leave your property. Do not invite other people to your house or leave your house to visit others. Avoid close contact with other people, especially those who are seniors, have chronic conditions, or a compromised immune system, even if they live in the same household. Do not go to work, school, church, social events or any other public gatherings as this is not allowed for anyone at this time. Watch for fever, cough or shortness of breath in yourself or family members.

- Call 1-800-922-0096 x 9 at the first sign of symptoms
- Call from home before going to a health care facility, unless severely ill. If severely ill and in need of immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them that you may have COVID-19 or Coronavirus

## **There is no vaccine for COVID-19 or coronavirus**

Right now, we do not have any medicine or immunizations that you can take to prevent you from getting COVID 19 or coronavirus. To help protect you and your family against all respiratory illnesses, including flu and COVID-19, you should:

- Wash your hands often and wash well, for 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick; stay at home and keep away from others if you are feeling ill
- Stay home unless you must go somewhere essential, and stay 6 feet/2 meters apart from anyone
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched, like door handles
- Contact 1-800-922-0096 x 9 if you have questions or concerns about your health
- When sick, cover your cough and sneezes, NOT with your hand, but into your elbow or a tissue, and then wash your hands immediately afterward

Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other lung sicknesses. The most common symptoms include fever, cough, and extreme tiredness. Most people (about 80%) recover from this disease without needing special treatment. However, it can cause serious illness. Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness, which can include: difficulty breathing and pneumonia (lung infection). There is a risk of death in severe cases.

While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects people, we know that older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

Call 1-800-922-0096 x 9 at the first sign of symptoms. Call from home before going to a health care facility, unless you are severely ill.

**Anyone who is ill with influenza-like symptoms, such as fever or cough should stay home for 14 days after the symptoms have started.**

## **What to do if you think that you have COVID-19/coronavirus**

If you have symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion or have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, you MUST self-isolate and stay home for 14 days.

- Complete the [COVID-19 online self-assessment](#) to determine if you should receive testing for COVID-19
- Please do not visit a hospital, physician's office, lab or healthcare facility without consulting first with Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 x 9
- If your symptoms worsen, call Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 x 9. We are experiencing heavy call volumes and will get to your call as quickly as we can
- Call 911 if you are seriously ill and need immediate medical attention. Inform them that you may have COVID-19.

We need your help to stop the spread of the virus. It is very important to follow these instructions so that we can keep everyone healthy. People are watching each other very closely right now. If you are not following these orders, then others around you may get scared or upset. It is better to stay home for a while and spend time with your family at home than to make others angry with us or afraid that we might make them sick. Please do your part and make sure that your children are staying home. Please don't have friends over or go to your friends' houses. We don't want anyone to have to involve the police over someone not following the orders to keep us safe. Let's do our part now so that this can all be over sooner! The people we could be making sick are someone's mom, dad, sister, brother, child or another loved one, and we wouldn't want to hurt them, just like we wouldn't want them to hurt us. If we all follow what the experts are saying to do to keep us safe, we can slow down the spread of this virus so the healthcare workers can help everyone who needs it. This is very serious, and we all need to do our part to keep ourselves and everyone around us safe and healthy. And we can do this by caring for ourselves and each other.