

## Update for Patients of Community Health & Wellness Partners

May 29, 2020

A lot has changed since COVID-19 (Coronavirus) first appeared in China in December 2019. This virus has spread throughout the world, causing countries and economies to “shut down.”

### What do we know about this virus?

- COVID-19 is a new virus to humans and is part of the Coronavirus family, which is home to the viruses that cause the common cold. Coronavirus is also home to the viruses that caused outbreaks of new infections of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012. Similar to COVID-19, both SARS and MERS were novel (never seen before) viruses, that each caused significant concern.
- COVID-19 is the newest of the novel coronaviruses. Being a novel virus means that there are 7.7 billion people around the world who are susceptible to COVID-19. First appearing in December 2019 in China, it has now spread to 188 countries and regions throughout the world. There are nearly 6 million confirmed cases worldwide, with over 1.7 million confirmed cases in the United States. There are over 360,000 deaths worldwide, with over 100,000 deaths in the United States. Although slowing in certain countries, the pandemic is still increasing in many parts of the world. Because there are many people who may have a COVID-19 infection but are not diagnosed or confirmed, the actual number of infected people is unknown. This makes calculating a mortality rate very difficult. It is likely to be less than 1%. For comparison, Influenza (the flu) has a mortality rate of 0.1%.
- It has been tempting to compare COVID-19 to Influenza, which comes to the United States every fall and winter, with varying numbers of cases and degrees of severity. Since 2010, Influenza has infected millions, resulting in many office visits and hospitalizations. According to the CDC, Influenza deaths in the United States, from 2010 to 2019, has ranged from 12,000 to 61,000. So far, COVID-19, by comparison, has killed over 100,000 Americans, while we have simultaneously been practicing increased hand hygiene and social distancing, and (largely) shutting down our economy.
- COVID-19 is a virus. While tempting to make this a political issue, it is a public health issue. COVID-19 does not care about our political party affiliation, race, gender, beliefs, etc. Though our symptoms may be different, we are all susceptible to a COVID-19 infection.

### Here are some key facts about COVID-19.

- There are over 7.7 billion people in the world who are susceptible to being infected.
- COVID-19 causes a spectrum of symptoms: approximately 80% have mild symptoms, but 20% have symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization, with 5% needing ICU care. There is an unknown number of people who can be infected with COVID-19 with minimal to no symptoms. This last fact means that COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not know they are infected.
- There is no known effective treatment. Although evaluated as a potential treatment, hydroxychloroquine has not been shown to have definitive effect against COVID-19. At this point, hydroxychloroquine is restricted by the FDA to use only in the very ill hospitalized patient. Remdesivir is an antiviral medication that is being used in hospitals on a limited basis

for the very ill. Primarily, treatment of patients is supportive, meaning things like oxygen (including ventilators), intravenous fluids, medications to support body functions, and antibiotics (if a secondary bacterial infection occurs).

- There is currently **no vaccine** to prevent COVID-19 infection, though there are numerous efforts around the world aimed at producing a vaccine in record time. Medical experts have suggested that a vaccine could be available in 2021. It needs to be recognized, however, that it may take years to vaccinate the 7.7 billion people around the world.

### **How has this affected Ohio?**

- There have been almost 34,000 cases, over 5,800 hospitalizations and over 2,000 deaths.
- Logan County has had 37 COVID-19 cases, with 4 hospitalizations and no deaths.
- Deaths are more likely in the elderly, with 92% of Ohio deaths occurring in people sixty years and older. A large percentage of deaths have occurred in congregate living situations, such as nursing homes. Fortunately, Logan County has had no confirmed COVID-19 cases in its nursing homes.
- Of the confirmed cases in Ohio, 15% have been medical workers.

### **What are the testing options?**

- PCR tests (also known as molecular) are the tests that have been available for diagnosing COVID-19 infection. Unfortunately, particularly in Ohio, these tests have been in short supply, which has resulted in a priority process in getting tested. Until recently, testing was largely limited to the very ill and for symptomatic medical workers. Though testing through Mary Rutan and the Ohio Department of Health is still subject to a triage process (where symptoms are reviewed and an OK to test is given), more testing is now available through private labs.
- Antigen tests look for portions of the virus. These tests have the possibility of making an in-office diagnosis of a COVID-19 infection. CHWP hopes to have this available by the fall of 2020.
- Serology testing measures the body's response to the COVID-19 virus. This test is not useful when a person is ill with a possible COVID-19 infection. Rather, this is the antibody test that tells us if a person has had the infection. Typically, the test will not turn positive until at least 2 weeks after a COVID-19 infection. It can be helpful, in retrospect, to see if a person has been infected by COVID-19. At this time, it is not known whether having antibodies to COVID-19 means that you are immune to reinfection by COVID-19.

### **What is CHWP's new normal?**

- Community Health & Wellness Partners highly values the health and safety of its patients and staff. We are entering the "New Normal." It is very different from what we are used to. We are hopeful and learning new things, but we also need to be careful.
- If you are ill, particularly with fever or cough, you **MUST** call before coming to the office. We will make arrangements to see you in a safe manner. This is to protect you, our staff and other patients.
- We ask that everyone (patients and staff) practice safe habits. When you come to the office, please wear a mask. If you do not have a mask, we will provide you with one. Please use the hand sanitizer.

- For visitors, we ask, if you do not need to be in the office, that you stay in your car. The exception is for patients who need assistance, such as children and the elderly.
- Even if you are inclined to think that the COVID-19 concern is overblown, please be kind and considerate of others who are concerned. Please wear a mask and practice safe habits.

It is commonly said but also true: “We are all in this together.” How the COVID-19 pandemic ends is up to each of us, in our own communities, practicing safe habits.