PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT: CORONAVIRUS

1. What is this new Corona virus, now called COVID-19?
This COVID-19 virus is a new respiratory viral infection. The viral droplets are dispersed onto different surfaces when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches a surface.

While there are no specific treatments for COVID-19, earlier supportive care may help lessen its impact. As with most diseases, COVID-19 will have its most severe impact on the elderly and persons already vulnerable from existing health problems. Regrettably, as with any new disease, our medical community is not fully prepared and is working hard to learn as much as possible. It is anticipated that it will take the medical community at least 18 months to have a vaccine for COVID-19.

2. How does COVID-19 spread from person to person?
COVID-19 is spread mostly via water droplets or mucous that an infected person coughs or sneezes out and by others touching things that an infected person touched. These water droplets can travel about 10 feet through the air from a cough or sneeze. If these viral droplets land on a surface that you later touch, you can pick up the virus that way.

The virus can remain active for different lengths of time depending upon the surface touched. For example, the virus could remain active for approximately 10 minutes on your skin or up to twelve hours on a metal surface you touch later. Some doctors are saying that the virus could remain active on different surfaces for at least one week.

3. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
The most common early symptoms of this virus are a fever, a dry sore throat, and a cough. As time passes and the symptoms worsens, you can have difficulty breathing and develop pneumonia. It is important to respond to these symptoms as early as possible by contacting your doctor for instructions.

4. What preventive steps should you take against COVID-19?
a. WASH YOUR HANDS thoroughly and frequently! The most common way of getting infected is by touching things when you are out in public and then touching your face. You should use hand sanitizer or handiwipes when out in public and wash your hands thoroughly when returning home. You should always wash your hands before touching your nose or your mouth.
b. You should avoid being in crowded spaces as much as possible.
c. You should step back from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
d. You should not shake hands with others at this time.
e. You should wear latex gloves or use a paper towel when using a gasoline pump.
f. You should wipe down your grocery cart handle.
g. You should use your knuckles to turn on light switches away from home.
h. You should use your shoulder or hip to open doors when away from home.
i. You should ask anyone visiting your home to wash their hands when they arrive.
j. You should wipe down frequently touched surfaces at home to keep them as clean as possible, e.g., doorknobs, counters, remotes, cell phones, light switches, etc.
k. You should use an antiseptic throat spray or gargle if your throat becomes sore. You can also take several zinc lozenges a day.
l. You should stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

5. What should you do if you feel ill?
   a. It is important to notice when you don’t feel well and to keep track of your symptoms.
   b. You should contact your doctor or hospital for instructions as to your supportive care needs and to arrange to get tested for the virus.
   c. You should stay home until you are confident that either you do not have the virus or until the doctor clears you to be with others.
   d. If you are ill, you should wear a face mask when around other people. It is thought that just a normal medical face mask is sufficient to prevent your viral droplets from being dispersed to those near you.
   e. You should isolate yourself to one area/room of your home and stay away from members of your family as much as possible.
   f. Whenever possible, you should cough or sneeze into a tissue and then discard the tissue. If that isn’t possible, you should cough or sneeze into the elbow area of your sleeve. But then be aware that the viral droplets will be on your sleeve. You will need to wash your shirt to be free of the infectious droplets.

6. What other preparations should you make?
   a. Be sure that you have a supply of your prescription medications.
   b. Be sure to buy extra non-perishable food items, including special foods for babies and pets.
   c. Be sure to have extra sanitary products like Kleenex, hand sanitizer, soap, Clorox wipes, isopropyl alcohol, etc. (Hand sanitizer should be at least 60% alcohol.)
   d. Be sure to stay in contact with your school, work, or childcare center.
   e. Be sure to stay in contact with family members and neighbors.

   Please use different medical or governmental websites to stay informed. Here are four websites that were used to write this handout.

   https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/

   https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx


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