



Essex County Office of the Manager

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To Our Essex County Residents and Visitors:

As we all deal with what is a difficult and unsettling time, we frequently have questions that often seem hard to find the answers to. In truth answers that may be accurate today often change. However, we have put together some of the frequently asked questions we have been getting to clarify what we do know. We hope to help all of you understand how this impacts you in your daily life.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – COVID-19

Question:

- Here in Essex County, I see on the local news that we only have a handful of positive cases, why is everyone making such a big deal over it?

Answer:

- ✓ The number of positive cases and more importantly the lack of positive cases is driven more by the availability of testing kits. Because the outbreak is so severe downstate, test kits north of Albany are very limited. That could change on a day by day basis, but right now testing for the general public is limited to individuals who are admitted to hospitals, and a certain amount are reserved for front line responders.
- ✓ We sincerely believe as do most health care experts that the number of infected individuals is significantly higher, and increasing daily due to several factors such as;
 - Lack of testing.
 - Individual who may have had what they thought was a flu but may have had a mild case of Covid-19.
 - Those individuals which may have it without showing any symptoms.

Question:

- So, what are we supposed to do if we get sick and need a test?

Answer:

- ✓ If you are showing symptoms of Covid-19, which the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines as “sudden onset of a fever of 100.4 and higher, dry cough and shortness of breath”, you should contact your regular doctor by phone for guidance.
- ✓ It is important to remember, health experts are indicating 80% or more of individuals who may come down with the virus will have mild cases, which are similar in nature to a regular flu. In those cases, the recommendation is the sickness can be maintained from home, but you should follow certain precautions;

- Stay home, isolate yourself and do not return to work without calling your employer, do not go to public places or ride public transportation for 7 days after the start of your symptoms.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home, try to maintain 3 feet of distancing.
- Do not have visitors or family and friends into your home, if you do have it you don't want to infect more people.
- Avoid sharing personal household items and clean all "high touch" surfaces daily.
- If available, wear a facemask if encountering others.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hand frequently and for at least 20 seconds with hot water and soap.
- Monitor your symptoms, including your temperature for worsening illness.

Question:

- What am I supposed to do if my symptoms do become worse?

Answer:

- ✓ Again, it is important to contact your regular doctor for guidance. Your doctor may feel you need to be seen, but there is very specific steps your physician's office has probably set up to handle how they address their patients with worsening conditions. Those procedures may vary from one provider to another, but the important thing is; Do not show up at your physician's office without calling.
- ✓ If you believe your conditions is a medical emergency, call 911.

Question:

- I keep hearing about the "vulnerable population" how is that being defined?

Answer:

- ✓ The CDC defines the vulnerable population based in part on the following;

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, **older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions** might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Based upon available information to date, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 include:

- People aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Other high-risk conditions could include:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma.
 - People who have serious heart conditions.

- People who are immunocompromised including cancer treatment.
- People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] >40) or certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as those with diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease might also be at risk.
- People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk with severe viral illness, however, to date data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk.

Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications.

Question:

- If I fall into the “vulnerable” group what could my symptoms be like?

Answer:

- ✓ Based on the CDC’s information early emergency warning signs may include the following;
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest.
 - New confusion or inability to arouse.
 - Bluish lips or face
- ✓ Please understand this list is not all-inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.
- ✓ Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed above.

Question:

- I still don’t understand, if I feel fine why I need to social distance and avoid groups?

Answer:

- ✓ Health experts are indicating based upon research from the earliest outbreaks that a certain percentage of individuals can be infected without showing any symptoms at all but can still pass it. Additionally, they are not certain of the time frame in which an individual can pass it. The incubation period is believed to be between 2 and 14 days, but they don’t yet definitively know at what period it can be passed.

Question:

- If I get it and it is like the regular flu, what’s the big deal? I don’t social distance and avoid groups for the regular flu.

Answer:

- ✓ There are some critical key differences between the regular flu and the Covid-19 virus. The regular flu is milder, the regular flu has vaccines to prevent it, and the regular flu has viral medications that are effective against it. Covid-19 has no vaccines, and currently there are no proven treatments that work.

- ✓ If you have the regular flu, and you encounter a vulnerable person, they most likely already received a vaccination, and if they haven't there is probably treatment options available to them. In truth many vulnerable individuals do pass away from regular flu and we all should be more careful about that.

Question:

- Are there other reasons why social distancing matters?

Answer:

- ✓ Aside from protecting your family and friends from getting what could easily be a tragic illness, there are other very important reasons that your cooperation in this is so important. As many of you may be aware, the County has over the last year or so has been actively involved in our Emergency Medical Services crisis. We have a shortage of EMS workers to meet our normal emergency needs. As more people get sick and more calls are made the system will quickly reach its breaking point. No one wants to call 911 and find out its going to take additional time to respond to your call. If your social distancing prevents one additional infection it will make a difference.
- ✓ Essex County and the surrounding area has very limited hospital beds, the more people who get seriously ill means we need to have a place to treat them. Your social distancing helps stop the spread; you would be doing your small part to protect those needing the highest level of care.
- ✓ The more people who get seriously ill, means our front-line responders the doctors, the nurses, our EMS people our Health Department employees and many of those working to support them, all become more likely to contract the virus themselves. As that happens less of them will be available to respond, and maybe to respond to someone you love.
- ✓ You can make a difference, do your part. Please Stop the Spread!

Our professionals in the Health Department are working on a more detailed FAQ which will provide appropriate links to important information. We will post that information soon for the public as an additional reference guide.

As County officials we are appreciative of all of you for your patience and understanding as we try to work thru this crisis. We know many of you are having a very difficult time, many are laid off and our businesses are being hit extremely hard as they and you bear the financial brunt of these shutdowns and forced closing. We have additional information on our website (www.co.essex.ny.us) and our various Facebook pages for essential services which we are doing our best to maintain. Once again, thank you and be safe.