

A COVID-19 coronavirus update from concerned physicians. Article adapted from physicians

HOWARD LUKS, MD, JOEL TOPF, MD, ETHAN J. WEISS, MD, WENDY SUE SWANSON, MD, BRYAN VARTABEDIAN, MD, CARRIE DIULUS, MD, NANCY YEN SHIPLEY, MD, AND DR. ERIC LEVI / [CONDITIONS](#) | MARCH 14, 2020

“Everything we do before a pandemic will seem alarmist. Everything we do after will seem inadequate.”

– Michael Leavitt

Why are we writing this?

The COVID-19 pandemic has reached a point where containment is no longer possible. The COVID-19 threat is real, and rapidly getting worse. Many of you are very nervous; some are unsure of the validity of the information you are reading. As physician leaders, we felt it was important to craft a resource you can rely on as being scientifically accurate and one which contains as much actionable information and guidance as possible. Accurate, actionable information during an epidemic can save lives.

COVID-19 isn't just the flu?

COVID-19 has been described by some as “just a cold,” or just like the common flu. COVID-19 is not a common flu. COVID-19 is an order of magnitude worse than the flu season. The health care system in the USA is not ready to handle tens of thousands of people over a short time frame. Our bodies form antibodies to foreign invaders, such as bacteria or viruses. If we have antibodies from a previous exposure, then we can rapidly ramp up the production of those antibodies if we are infected by that same virus later. Because no one has antibodies, everyone is at risk for catching the virus, becoming ill, and spreading the virus so that it can infect those around you.

Is it time to panic? No.

This document is trying to help you to understand the situation at hand and for you to understand the facts and understand what is at stake.

Personal risk vs. systemic risk

When we talk about risk, there are many different elements to consider. Naturally, we are concerned about ourselves and our loved ones. What we as physicians are most concerned about is systemic risk. Complex systems, such as our health care system, function because all the moving pieces fit together and interact with one another in such a way that the system functions under normal loads, lower than normal loads, and slightly higher than normal loads but may break down under the very high loads we anticipate with COVID-19 which may delay other patients being treated.

WHO is at risk: The higher risk patients are the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions such as respiratory, cardiac issues and diabetics. The challenge is this: By following the appropriate recommended social isolation measures, you will be saving lives of not just those at increased risk who are infected, but also those who need other critical health care services, including potentially yourself. You will be saving the lives of people you will never meet.

Who should follow our suggested social isolation measures? EVERYONE. If you do not need to go out for a mission-critical purpose, do not. Again, you WILL be saving the lives of at-risk members of your own family, as well as people you will never have the pleasure of meeting.

What should we do? The importance of social isolation.

The virus is already in the country and is currently spreading. We use the description: We must flatten the curve. That means that we need to slow the rate of infection so that the number of people who need hospital services remains in the range that our health care system can supply. Who should follow our suggested social isolation measures? EVERYONE. If you do not need to go out for a mission-critical purpose, do not. Again, you WILL be saving the lives of at-risk members of your own family, as well as people you will never have the pleasure of meeting.

All of you can save lives starting now.

The actions you take starting today will save the lives of people you will never meet.

Mitigation measures for COVID-19

- 6 feet: The COVID-19 virus spreads through droplets. They can move 6 feet before gravity brings them to earth. Stay 6 feet away from people if you need to go outside.
- Meticulous hand washing: Wash thoroughly and wash often preferably with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer also work.
- Do not touch your face. This is hard. This is a learned skill: Practice often.
- Clean and disinfect doorknobs, toilets, cellphones, countertops, refrigerator handles, and so on many times each day. The virus could live on certain surfaces for up to 5 days.
- If you can work from home, work from home.
- No tournaments, no sports events, no soccer, baseball, dance, volleyball, softball, gymnastics, concerts, martial arts, etc. Play outside at home! Go hiking, kick a ball. More fresh air and less germs!
- Don't go visit family in the nursing home if you have the sniffles. Call instead!
- Cancel vacation travel. We know you planned this for a long time. You will be saving many lives by doing so ... perhaps someone you know.
- Cancel weddings/ bar/bat mitzvahs, birthday parties, and so on. Help other people live so they can celebrate future events too.
- If you are over 60 years old, you should stay home. You should only go out if there is a critical need.
- Do not congregate in a restaurant, bar, etc. Again, you will save the lives of people you will never meet.
- If you feel sick, stay home. It doesn't matter if you don't feel too sick. Going to work will put countless other people at risk of suffering or dying.
- Cancel all business travel. Your life and the lives of others are more important.
- Expect supply chain issues: Work with your doctor to try to get a three-month supply of medication or use online shopping.
- Many grocery stores have order ahead options with pick up. Wash your hands thoroughly after unpacking groceries.
- **Don't believe all you see on social media!**