
Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

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Dear Local Health Improvement Coalition Members:

The Coronavirus (called COVID19) has been prominent in the news and I want to take this opportunity to update you on current developments and local planning efforts, as well as to provide guidance on how best to prevent the spread of this virus.

To prepare our community, HCHD and many local partners and agencies, have been actively engaged from the first announcement of this virus many weeks ago to ensure we are prepared to respond to this urgent public situation locally. We have communicated to community clinicians to ensure they are equipped to respond and directly and have established systems to monitor any Howard County resident that may be exposed and be placed on self-quarantine. A warmline (410-313-6284) has also been established to respond to questions from the community.

While there is currently no vaccine or medication to treat this virus, there are many things we can all do to help limit the spread of this virus:

- You should stay home when you are sick
 - If you think you have been exposed to someone with coronavirus or may have coronavirus contact your medical provider or call HCHD at 410-313-6284 before going to the medical office or hospital.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes by using a tissue and then throwing it in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow. Do not use your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Clean frequently touched surfaces daily (Use soap & water or any disinfectant with a label that says "EPA approved" for killing bacteria and viruses)
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick

There are many questions about the use of facemasks. CDC does not currently recommend the general public use facemasks. Instead, CDC recommends following everyday preventive actions, such as washing your hands, covering your cough, and staying home when you are sick. Most often, spread of respiratory viruses from person-to-person happens among close contacts (within 6 feet). There are things that we can all do to be more prepared for COVID-19 such as:

- Have an adequate supply of nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, which could include pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Check your regular prescription drugs to make sure you have an adequate supply. Refill your prescriptions if needed.

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- Have a thermometer, tissues, and hand sanitizer in case you become ill and must stay at home to recover.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Have a two-week supply of water and food in your home.

In addition to practicing the prevention and preparedness tips discussed, it is important that community members:

- Stay informed and only get information from trusted, official sources. Be especially wary of myths, rumors, and misinformation circulating online and elsewhere. Health information spread on social media is frequently inaccurate.
- For more information about COVID-19, visit our website at www.hchealth.org, as well as the Maryland Department of Health <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov. You can also contact the HCHD at 410-313-6284.

I am thankful to all of you for your dedication to the health of our community.

Maura Rossman



Maura J. Rossman, MD
Health Officer
Co-Chair, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
Howard County Health Department