

Advanced Primary Care Newsletter MARCH 13, 2020 on COVID-19 Pandemic



On March 11, 2020 WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, since then there has been lots of fear and anxiety among Canadians. Globally there is close to 130,000 individuals infected with 4721 COVID-19 related deaths. However, it is important to know **the vast majority of those infected with COVID-19 recover.**

Nationally we have 117 cases with 2 deaths, although the number is low however this could change rapidly. This is the time to contain the infection and keep the number of infected low and slow the spread of the disease.

It takes more than our government and health sector to keep us healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. **All of us has a role to play** to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Each of us can help our country be prepared during this pandemic by understanding **how coronavirus spreads** and **how to prevent illness.**

Be Prepared but stay Calm and do not Panic

What can I do to be prepared during this pandemic?

1. Identify whether you or your love ones are vulnerable for more severe disease. There is an increased risk of more severe COVID-19 outcomes for Canadians:
 - aged 65 and over
 - with compromised immune systems
 - with underlying medical conditions
2. Take actions to keep yourself healthy and safe by avoiding those who are sick and practice hand washing to prevent the spread of any illness, especially respiratory infections.
3. **Stay home if you are sick.** Encourage those you know are sick to stay home until they no longer have symptoms.
4. Respiratory viruses, such as the one that causes COVID-19, are spread through contact, change how you greet one another. Instead of a handshake, a kiss or a hug, a friendly wave or elbow bump is less likely to expose you to respiratory viruses.
5. Practice frequent **hand hygiene** and **coughing and sneezing etiquette.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as toys and door handles.
6. **Make a plan** during the pandemic:

For individuals

- If COVID-19 becomes common in your community, think of how to change your routines to reduce the risk of infection.

Your plan should include how you can change your regular habits to reduce your exposure to crowded places.

Below are a few examples:

- Do your grocery shopping at off-peak hours or have grocery delivery to your home.
- Have your medication deliver to your home by the pharmacy.
- Commute by public transit outside of the busy rush hour.
- Exercise outdoors or at home instead of in an indoor fitness class.
- Work at home if possible.
- Plan what you will do if you become sick. If you are a caregiver of children or other dependents, you will want to think ahead to engage backup caregivers.
- You should think about what you will do if a member of your family becomes sick and needs care. Talk to your employer about working from home if you are needed to care for a family member at home.
- You should also have a plan for alternate child care in the scenarios that schools and daycare facilities are closed.
- If you become ill, **stay home until you are no longer showing symptoms**. Employers should not require a sick leave note as that will put added pressure on limited health care services.
- Plan **shopping for supplies** that you should have on hand at all times. This will ensure you do not need to leave your home while you are sick or busy caring for an ill family member.
- Check and fill your prescriptions
Check your prescription medications, refill your prescriptions now so that you do not have to go to a busy pharmacy if you do become sick. APC will ensure your prescription is for 3 months.
- Stock up on essentials but **avoid panic buying**. It makes sense to fill your cupboards with non-perishable food items, so that you do not need to go shopping if you become sick. Buy enough food for 2 weeks.

It is easier on the supply chain if people gradually build up their household stores instead of making large-scale purchases all at once. Good options are easy-to-prepare foods like:

- dried pasta and sauce
- prepared canned soups
- canned vegetables and beans
- rice
- canned meat and fish

It is also a good idea to have extra stores of:

- pet food
- toilet paper
- facial tissue
- feminine hygiene products
- diapers (if you have children who use them)
- soap and detergents

The reason for stocking up on these items is not necessarily because you will need to self-isolate. Having these supplies on hand will ensure you do not need to leave your home at the peak of the outbreak or if you become ill.

- Get reliable information on how to care for the sick family members.
Make sure that you get high-quality information about COVID-19 from reliable sources. The Public Health Agency of Canada is a reliable source of information, as are provincial and territorial public health authorities.

If you are finding that the news media is making you feel anxious, take a break from it.

- **How to care for those who are ill**

If you or a member of your family become ill with COVID-19, there are **precautions that should be taken in the home**. Your APC health care provider will advise you if hospital care is more appropriate. See previous APC newsletter on Coronavirus.

To prepare for this potential situation, you should have on hand:

- soap
 - facial tissue
 - paper towels
 - alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - household cleaning products
 - regular detergents for washing dishes and doing laundry
 - fever-reducing medications, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen this includes products for children if you are a parent or caregiver
 - plastic garbage bags for containing soiled tissues and other waste
 - household bleach for creating a solution of 1-part bleach to 9 parts water to disinfect surfaces
- Communicate with family, friends and neighbors.
Let your family, friends and neighbors know that you are making plans to prepare for COVID-19. Share your plan with them, as this might motivate them to make their own.
Talk to them about a buddy system in which you agree to check in on each other and run essential errands if you become sick.

For communities

Social distancing measures are a way to minimize COVID-19 transmission in the community. This means **minimizing close contact with others during the peak of an outbreak**. In addition to **staying home when ill**, we should plan for actions we can take if we need to reduce the spread of infection in places where we gather.

For workplaces

Employers and employees have a role to play in reducing the spread of infection.

Follow the link below for further information on how to prepare your workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>

From your APC health Team