WHAT KENTUCKIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19

Updated March 30, 2020

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 -- also known as the novel coronavirus -- is a new respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus thought to spread from person-to-person through tiny droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath, **BUT** many people with the coronavirus have no symptoms or may be contagious for up to two weeks before feeling sick.

Why is this different from the seasonal flu?

- COVID-19 is a new disease. There is no vaccine or treatment available at this time.
- Compared to the flu, COVID-19 is far more deadly.
- The CDC and other researchers tracking COVID-19 cases have found that:
  - About 80% of COVID-19 cases appear to be mild to moderate, while 20% are more serious and require medical care or hospitalization. That's 10 times more than the flu.
  - About 5% of people infected with COVID-19 will need intensive hospitalization and an estimated 3.4% are likely to die. In comparison, the season flu has a death rate of 0.1%.
- Governor Beshear has reported that about 33% of known cases in Kentucky have required hospitalization with 6% of individuals needing ICU care.

How contagious is COVID-19?

- On average, one person infected with the new coronavirus will infect another 3 people.
- When those 3 people each infect three more, it becomes 9, then 27, then 81, and so on.

How can I protect myself and others?

We all have a role to play in protecting not just ourselves but our neighbors, friends and everyone else we interact with. These are the best ways to stop the spread of COVID-19.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds;
- Only use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with more than 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not available;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Stay home if you are sick;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces; and
- Engage in social distancing by avoiding public places and staying 6 feet apart.

Who's at risk?

- Any of us can carry the virus and spread it to others. Even when we feel fine.

- Older adults and people of any age with chronic health conditions are hit hardest by the virus. While those who are older and those who have chronic conditions – meaning lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, etc. – are at the greatest risk, any of us can be exposed to and spread COVID-19 to our friends, our family and our communities.

- 60% of all Americans have at least one chronic health condition, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma or cancer, which puts them at higher risk.

- People who smoke or vape tobacco products are also thought to be at higher risk.

What if I feel fine?

Even if you feel OK, you might be infected, and you can still pass the virus on to others who may be at risk of serious illness or even death.

Should I be tested?

Not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19 and access to the test has been limited due to a shortage of supplies. Here is some information that might help in making decisions about seeking care or testing:

- If you have symptoms or know that you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, getting tested may be the right choice.

- Testing results can take many days to come back from the lab and social distancing is still the best way to avoid spreading the virus.

- With or without a test, most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home.

- When in doubt, call Kentucky's official COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-722-5725.

What do the terms"social distancing" and "Healthy at Home" mean?

- Social distancing means avoiding close contact by staying at least 6 feet away from people who don't live with you.

- Governor Beshear has asked Kentuckians to be "Healthy at Home," which means staying home from work, school, church or other social activities, as much as possible. Limit your trips to the bank, gas station, or grocery store and don't go out more than necessary. If you absolutely must be out in public, stay 6 feet away from other people.

Why do I need to practice social distancing?

- Social distancing is a way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Remember, even if you feel fine, you could still spread the virus to others.

- Social distancing takes each of us doing our part. If we do this right, we can limit the number of people who get the virus and reduce the number of people needing hospitalization and ventilators at any one time. This will save lives.

What does it mean to "flatten the curve"?

- The COVID-19 "curve" is a graph that displays infection rates over time. The sooner our communities take steps to prevent the spread of the virus, the flatter the curve will be.

- These graphics show how social distancing can "flatten the curve" by slowing the spread of infection and saving lives.

- Watch Dr. Steven Stack, Public Health Commissioner, talk about "flattening the curve."

- Based on current infection rates, researchers have found that social distancing is starting to work in Kentucky. **IF** Kentuckians continue to follow current social distancing guidelines put in place by Governor Beshear, our hospitals should be able to serve everyone who needs care and Kentucky will save thousands of lives.

What about the economy?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a national public health crisis. Lack of health insurance and paid leave have put us all at greater risk of illness and financial insecurity.

- If we carried on with business as usual, our healthcare system would be unable to serve everyone who needs care, including people with acute illnesses and chronic conditions.

- Doing nothing would result in millions of Americans - including tens of thousands of Kentuckians - dying from COVID-19.

- This pandemic has caused a recession that requires state and federal relief to get our economy back on track.

  - Governor Beshear is encouraging Kentuckians to apply for unemployment insurance and other public benefits, like Medicaid and SNAP (food assistance).

  - Congress recently passed major legislation to spend trillions of dollars on expanded testing and treatment, increased access to needed public benefits, direct cash relief to Americans, paid leave to many workers, increased unemployment benefits for people who lost their jobs, and needed bailouts for businesses and corporations with strict oversight.

  - As part of the federal CARES Act, most adults will get a one-time payment of up to $1,200. For every qualifying child age 16 or under, the payment will be an additional $500. Be sure to file a tax return for 2018 or 2019 to receive your payment.

Where can you get more information?

- Check out Kentucky's official COVID-19 website: www.kycovid19.ky.gov
- Tune in to Governor Beshear's daily briefings at 5pm ET for updates. Watch on:
    - KET: online at www.ket.org or on TV at KET1
    - Facebook: www.facebook.com/GovAndyBeshear
    - Twitter: https://twitter.com/GovAndyBeshear
    - YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChRbM-FLeKV4tKUwlMf6XNg
- Call the COVID-19 hotline: 1-800-722-5725
- Watch and share the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky's video PSAs.

When should I seek care?

Follow these steps, in this order:

1. If you are well, but nervous and need information, call Kentucky's official COVID-19 hotline: 1-800-722-5725.
2. If you are sick, but would have otherwise not sought care but for the coronavirus, call your healthcare provider. Don't go to a healthcare facility without calling for guidance.
3. If you are sick or injured and feel that it is an emergency, seek care immediately.

How long will this take?

- It's hard to say how long this pandemic will last, but it is likely to take many months.
- The more diligently **all** Kentuckians practice strict social distancing, the more successful we will be at slowing the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

Where can I get help?

More than 223,000 Kentuckians are currently uninsured and many have lost jobs or are working fewer hours because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kentucky's safety-net programs are here to help all of us through hard times.

- Apply for public benefits for help with food, cash assistance and medical care through the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) online at www.benefind.ky.gov or call the DCBS hotline at 1-855-306-8959;
- Apply for unemployment through the Kentucky Career Center (KCC) online at https://kcc.ky.gov/career or call: 502-875-0442
- Apply for disaster loan assistance through the Small Business Administration: https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/
- Be sure you have filed a tax return for 2018 or 2019 to claim your one-time federal stimulus payment.

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What can I do to help others?

- Support your local restaurants, businesses, and nonprofits by ordering out, buying gift cards to use later or making a donation.

- Make a tax deductible donation to the [Team Kentucky relief fund](#).

- Report businesses or groups that are putting people at risk by calling the Kentucky Labor Cabinet's hotline at 1-833-597-2337.

- Report price gouging by calling the Attorney General's Consumer Protection hotline at 888-432-9257 or by filling out the [complaint form online](#).

- Complete your Census on paper or online! A complete count will bring critically needed revenue to Kentucky for healthcare, education, roads, and much more.

- Contact your elected officials:

  Elected officials have the power to vote on bills and spending to deal with this pandemic, help Kentuckians rebuild, and prevent a future crisis. Let them know that:

  - All Kentuckians deserve jobs that pay living wages, guaranteed paid sick leave, and access to affordable health care without barriers.

  - Kentuckians need swift relief with access to safety-net programs for health care, food assistance, cash assistance, and adequate housing.

  - To prevent another crisis like COVID-19, Kentucky needs lasting investments in a strong public health system and a safety-net that catches people when life takes an unexpected turn.