

C NORTH OAKS Community

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SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION

COVID-19: **What You Need To Know**

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When 7th Ward General Hospital was founded April 20, 1960, no one could have imagined that six decades later our world would be faced with a global pandemic that would impact the lives of Florida Parishes citizens. Since those humble beginnings, the health and safety of our community have always been our highest priority, and our team continues to work tirelessly to protect us all. While we strive to meet the needs

of everyday patient care we must also respond to the exceptional circumstances presented by COVID-19.

Most of us have been impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, and I sincerely want to express my gratitude to the North Oaks team for the determination and fortitude shown during the past weeks. From our front-line doctors and nurses to the behind-the-scenes workers, I'm exceptionally proud of all who have rallied while putting aside their personal circumstances during this time.

Our employees have had to adjust to unusual working conditions, flexible schedules and limited resources during a constant state of flux. Many were forced to juggle child care arrangements amid daycare and school closures. Others have had to care for elderly parents and those with special health conditions who had to self-isolate following guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

With that in mind, we have been thoughtful about procedures and policies, acting on guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and the Louisiana Department of Health. While the reasons for these temporary changes may not always be clear, each has been made with the well-being of our patients, visitors and employees in mind. This special issue of CommUnity was planned to provide helpful information for our friends and neighbors. Please keep in mind that events around this catastrophe are very fluid, and we have endeavored to offer material that is useful while still being timely.

I want to again commend the North Oaks team for the amazing perseverance and selflessness demonstrated during this pandemic. As the coronavirus presents new challenges, one thing has been consistent during our 60-year history: our commitment to improving lives. I hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy as we navigate these unexpected and exceptional circumstances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Sutton', written over a light blue background.

Michele K. Sutton, FACHE



By North Oaks
Chief Medical Officer
Dr. Robert Peltier

The Coronavirus Chronicle

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats and bats.

Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside Hubei and in countries outside China, including in the United States.

More cases of COVID-19 are likely to be identified in the coming days, including more cases in the United States. It's also likely that person-to-person spread will continue to occur.

The federal government is working closely with state, local, tribal and territorial partners, as well as public health partners, to respond to this public health threat.

Take Everyday Steps to Guard Against Coronavirus

As the 2019 coronavirus – which causes the disease known as COVID-19 – continues to be a public health concern, citizens can do their part in responding to the illness.

Because there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, health officials agree that the best protection from the virus and others, like the flu, is practicing everyday habits.

As a reminder, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) always recommends preventive actions to help stop the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect

frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Wash your hands often

with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.

If soap and water are not readily available,

use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings.

Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and cancer seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.

The North Oaks COVID-19 Screening line is (985) 230-2778. Call if you have fever, rapid onset or deepening of cough or difficulty breathing. You will be screened and given directions.

Because this is a rapidly evolving situation please visit www.northoaks.org/coronavirus for more information and updates.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Boost Your Immune System

When it comes to fighting viruses like coronavirus, one method is to have a strong immune system.

Your immune system defends you against disease-causing microorganisms, but sometimes it fails and you get sick. And, as you age, your immune response capability becomes reduced. Others with underlying health conditions – like those fighting cancer – may also have a compromised immune system.

Here are some tips to boost your immune system and help battle COVID-19:

- **Stay active** – Exercise causes your body’s antibodies and white blood cells to circulate more rapidly. Stress hormones are also lowered by being active, which reduces chances for sickness.
- **Watch your diet** – Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds to provide your body with the nutrients your immune system needs.
- **Keep calm** – There’s a link between your immune health and your mental health. A daily exercise routine or meditation, reading or watching light-hearted movies may help.
- **Get your Z’s** – Sleeping is a natural immune system booster. If you’re sleep-deprived, your body produces stress hormones that can suppress your immune system. Try to get at least seven hours of sleep a night.
- **Catch some rays** – Sunlight triggers the production of vitamin D. Low vitamin D levels link to a greater risk of respiratory infection.
- **Drink less alcohol** – It may be tempting to try to lift your spirits with the liquid kind, but too much can impair the immune system and increase vulnerability to lung infections.

Remember, take care of yourself by following these simple tips and your immune system will help take care of you.

Sources: AARP, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Healthy Eating Supports Your Immune System

A variety of nutrients are essential to a strong immune system and can help fight off illness and other health problems.

Protein

is especially important for healing and recovery. Some protein foods include seafood, lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products and unsalted nuts and seeds.

Vitamin A

helps regulate the immune system and protect against infections by keeping skin and tissues in the mouth, stomach, intestines and respiratory system healthy. Foods full of vitamin A include sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach, red bell peppers, apricots and eggs.

Vitamin C

supports the immune system by forming antibodies. Choose citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit and tangerines), red bell peppers, papaya, strawberries and tomato juice.

Vitamin E

works as anti-oxidant to support immune function. Sunflower seeds, almonds, vegetable oils (sunflower or safflower oil), hazelnuts and peanut butter provide vitamin E.

Zinc

supports the immune system and helps wounds heal. It can be found in lean meat, poultry, seafood, milk, whole grain products, beans, seeds and nuts.

Other Nutrients

including **vitamins B6 and B12, copper, folate, selenium** and **iron** also play a role in a healthy diet.

Talking to Children About COVID-19

Concern about COVID-19 has put fear in adults across the globe so it's natural that children are picking up their anxiety. For parents, acknowledging some level of concern and providing accurate prevention information and facts – without panicking – is appropriate and can help children cope.

If parents seem overwhelmed or overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should assure children that health officials are working hard to ensure that people stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of disease can help reduce anxiety.

The National Association of School Psychologists offers these tips:

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Children react to and follow your verbal and non-verbal reactions.
- What you say can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- If true, emphasize to your children that you and your family are fine.
- Let your children talk about their feelings.

Make yourself available.

- Children may need extra attention from you to talk about concerns and fears.
- Tell them that you love them often and give them plenty of affection.

Avoid excessive blaming.

- It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people responsible for the virus.
- Be aware of comments that other adults are having around your family. You may have to explain what comments mean if they are different than your values.

Monitor TV viewing and social media.

- Try to avoid watching or listening to information that might be upsetting your children. Constantly watching updates can increase anxiety.
- Engage your child in games or other activities.

Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

- Keep to a regular schedule. This can be reassuring and promotes physical health.

Be honest and accurate.

- Children often imagine situations worse than reality so provide factual information.
- Don't ignore their concerns.
- Children can be told this disease is thought to be spread between people who are in close contact with one another – when an infected person coughs or sneezes.



You know your children best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Information is rapidly changing, and so **stay informed by visiting www.northoaks.org/coronavirus or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.**

Source: National Association of School Psychologists

What Heart Patients Need to Know

Patients with heart disease have extra reasons to be concerned about coronavirus, according to experts with the American Heart Association.

For people with underlying heart issues, the concerns are serious. It appears elderly people with coronary heart disease or high blood pressure are more likely to be infected and to develop more severe symptoms.

Based on early reports, **40% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients had cardiovascular disease or cerebrovascular disease** (which refers to blood flow in the brain, such as stroke).

The virus's main target is the lungs. But that could affect the heart, especially a diseased heart, which has to work harder to get oxygenated blood throughout the body. That could exacerbate problems for someone with heart failure, where the heart is already having problems pumping efficiently.

Someone with an underlying heart issue also might have a less robust immune system. People's immune systems weaken as they age.

A virus also may pose a **special risk for people who have the fatty buildup** known as plaque in their arteries. Evidence indicates similar viral illnesses can destabilize these plaques, potentially resulting in the blockage of an artery feeding blood to the heart, putting patients at risk of heart attack.

Information about COVID-19 is changing rapidly. But previous coronaviruses, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and MERS, offer insight. They were linked to problems like inflammation of the heart muscle, heart attack and rapid-onset heart failure.

Anyone with serious heart conditions should **follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, including hand-washing, physical distancing and eating a healthy diet to protect the immune system.

Source: American Heart Association



How Long Does the Coronavirus Live on Surfaces?

Recent tests indicate that the coronavirus called **COVID-19 can live on surfaces and remain infectious at room temperature for up to nine days**. On average, it may survive between four and five days. There is so much unknown at this time in regard to how the virus reacts in different environments, such as the temperature or exposure to sunlight. We do know that COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets. People must be within six feet of someone who is contagious and come into contact with these droplets. It may be possible for a person to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly eyes.

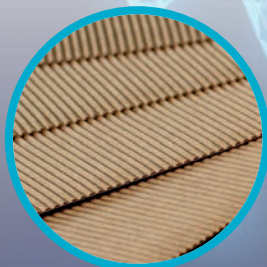
Below is information on how long coronavirus is thought to live on different surfaces:

Copper



up to 4 hours

Cardboard



up to 24 hours

Plastic



up to 3 days

Stainless Steel



up to 3 days

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces in your home each day, including counters, kitchen and bathroom fixtures, doorknobs, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, work stations and bedside tables.

Sources: www.health.harvard.edu, www.cdc.gov

HELPFUL RESOURCES

North Oaks Health System	www.northoaks.org/coronavirus
Louisiana Dept. of Health	www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus
Centers for Disease Prevention & Control	www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
National Alliance on Mental Illness	www.nami.org
Keeping Calm through COVID Hotline	1 (866) 310-7977 (24/7)
North Oaks Screening Line	(985) 230-2778

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The information in this newsletter is meant to complement the advice of your health care providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your health care provider.

The North Oaks Health System mission is to improve lives, every time and with every touch.



www.northoaks.org

We're Here For You. Stay Home For Us.



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