

Understanding Coronavirus

COVID-19 has worked its way into our daily focus as a population. As new information develops and positive diagnoses rise, understanding the disease and practicing protective measures serve as our best bets at flattening the curve and reducing strain on hospital resources.

“This is a new virus and therefore people do not have immunity to it,” remarks Anna Robb, Infection Prevention Nurse at Stoughton Health. “That’s why we’re taking such big precautions to make sure that people are at home, and we don’t allow it to spread the way that it could if people continued to remain in close contact.”

Signs You Have COVID-19

For many people, COVID-19 will run its course much like the common cold or seasonal flu. Symptoms are similar for most people and don’t typically require a visit to urgent care or the emergency department. Robb notes, “Most of these symptoms are things that people can manage at home with increasing their hydration, obviously isolating, taking fever-reducing medications if needed, and just symptomatically managing at home like they would with flu or a cold.”

Some cases are more severe and require medical assistance. Robb reports that shortness of breath, chest tightness, or respiratory difficulty should prompt a visit to the hospital. Otherwise, symptom management with over-the-counter medications should suffice for most.

The current guideline for incubation is 14 days. If you think you’ve been exposed to coronavirus, immediately self-quarantine and monitor your symptoms. Reduce community spread but seek medical treatment if needed.

Treating Coronavirus

“This virus is not the flu. We know that,” mentions Robb. “It’s a coronavirus.” Still, the current recommendation is symptomatic management with acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fevers. Hydration is helpful with any illness.

Some groups are at higher risk for complications. The elderly and people with serious underlying conditions are at-risk populations. The respiratory issues in severe cases also put people with asthma at higher risk.

At present, there is no vaccine and no antiviral treatment in place to eradicate the virus. Healthcare facilities work to test those who are very ill and provide medical support until the virus runs its course.

How to Stay Safe

Many cities and states have implemented measures or made recommendations to slow the spread of this virus. Transmission appears to occur via respiratory droplets, much like the flu. “Obviously, with something new like this, we want to take an abundance of caution. We are continuing to make every effort to provide and help people have access to resources, if it is spread in an airborne capacity,” Robb informs.

Exercise the same kind of precaution you would with the flu. Frequent and complete hand-washing, covering coughs to reduce projection of respiratory droplets, and disinfecting surfaces are all wise actions to take. Work from home if at all possible.

Robb adds, “We are asking people to try to think critically about what is urgent or emergent at this point, what is not necessary, and what kind of things they can cancel.” You will need to get groceries and necessities, but be mindful about social distancing when shopping for necessary supplies.

“We want to be making decisions out of an abundance of caution and not be at a point down the road where we feel like we could have or should have done more. There’s room for feeling anxiety and fear about this, but we really encourage people to continue to try to make the best decisions they can for their neighborhood and their community, trying to stay home and limiting exposures, and then certainly staying up on reliable sources of information.”



***To listen to an interview on this topic with Anna Robb, Infection Prevention Nurse at Stoughton Health, follow this link: <https://radiomd.com/stoughton/item/41921>*