

A message from



March 22, 2020

It goes without saying that these are very trying times filled with anxiety, uncertainty, and a sense of loss of control across our country. The COVID-19 outbreak has accelerated in highly populated areas downstate, but locally we still have an opportunity to reduce the spread in our community.

For those under 65 years old without other chronic medical conditions that become infected with COVID-19, it is expected that they will be sick for a few days with fever and cough, similar to influenza, and have spontaneous recovery not requiring hospitalization, or even a doctor's visit.

However, we know some people, including healthy people of all ages, will get very sick and need to be admitted to the hospital and possibly the intensive care unit, and that is the BIG concern.

Observations from other communities have shown that once COVID-19 begins to spread through the community, hospitals and emergency rooms may be overrun - stretched beyond capacity in a matter of a few days. This could lead to a shortage of needed supplies including hospital beds, ventilators, and personal protective gear for health care workers. As more workers get sick and resources are further depleted, services required to care for people with other health issues unrelated to COVID-19 may be difficult to provide.

We will get through this by working together as a community. We must do everything we can to protect our community members and prevent our health care systems from being overburdened.

This brings us to the most important point: **we want to reduce community spread as much as possible.** As of March 22, 2020, at 10:00AM, there are 4 known COVID positive cases north of Cadillac, but this will change. **The best way to mitigate community spread for now is to practice social distancing. Outings should be limited to get food, prescriptions, and needed supplies.** For more guidelines on social distancing, please visit nwhealth.org/covid19.

Testing for COVID-19 is currently in limited supply although we are hopeful capacity will increase soon. *If you have symptoms of fever and cough but are otherwise okay, testing for COVID-19 is not routinely recommended and you should self-isolate.* Like any illness, if you feel you need immediate care call your provider, and if you are seriously ill or experiencing severe shortness of breath, call 911. Otherwise, if you have questions, we recommend calling your primary care provider or calling the McLaren Northern Michigan Hotline at 231-487-5550 between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., the Munson Healthcare Charlevoix Hospital call center at 231-547-8858 between the hours of 7 a.m. – 7 p.m., the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-535-6136 between the hours of 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., or the Health Department of Northwest Michigan's Public Health Information Line at 1-800-386-5959.

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