
FROM THE DESKS OF
DAVID L MELLMAN MD &
JEANNETTE GUERRASIO MD

April 6, 2020

To Our Patients:

I realized last weekend, that with less social activities I am feeling less rushed to get work done around the house. I can actually take time to enjoy Spring cleaning and freshening up the garden beds. From this realization, I decided to reach out to see how your lives have changed in a positive way since COVID 19 and we received over 100 responses. We hope you had as much fun with this as we did reading your emails. If only we could have replied to each and every one of them. I've combined and condensed the responses below. The second half of the email contains answers to some of your questions. Enjoy!

Positive results of COVID-19 and having to Shelter-in-Place

- I got my taxes done – before April 15th!
- I have overcome my fear of online virtual meetings (Bow—Applause)
- Getting to know my neighbors better, at appropriate social distance and saying hello to neighbors as they walk by
- Laughter IS the best medicine, enjoying online memes, videos, posts
- Re-discovering my creativity
- Brought mom/adult children back home to live with us
- Ability to do purposeful work, purchased a sewing machine to make masks, and now learning how to make clothes at the request of my three-year-old
- I learned to use Zoom!
- Family and friend video chat happy hour via Zoom/Facetime so we can see our loved ones
- Re/Discovering Meditation
- Listening to the birds outside as I drink my coffee in the early morning
- Daily conversations with my kids and grandkids
- Making time to read, appreciating my Kindle to download books
- Downloading Grocery apps
- I've learned I can clean the house better than the cleaning lady
- I still love my spouse after lots and lots of years!
- My spouse is working from home and I can't wait until s/he retires
- Watching lectures from The Great Courses: Algebra 1, WWI, Meteorology and History of European Art
- Binge watching opera from "The Met" (aka The Metropolitan Opera)
- Exercising, biking, taking long walks, or just being outside
- Playing online games like Mahjong with friends and boardgames with family

- Emailing and texting friends I hadn't made time to connect with in awhile
- Painting
- Watching a movie each day
- Learning Spanish
- Talking on an "old-fashioned phone" with friends (Is it avocado green, like my mom's?)
- Yardwork and gardening, time to watch the perennials and bulbs bloom
- Slower pace of life, particularly the morning routine is less frenzied
- More time to spend with family, having a spouse home who usually travels for work
- Sleeping better as I don't have to get up early for work
- Time to cook and experiment with cooking, including Bobbie Flay's recipes
- Becoming more tolerant of my spouse, becoming more compatible and bickering less over minor things
- Completing projects that I've put off for a loonnnggg time
- Attending a music session on Zoom
- Evening discussions with my high school aged children, hearing and learning how they view the world and relationships
- Bringing the family closer together
- Purging my office of old documents and clutter, and filing
- Date night cruising around town in my truck
- Being told I don't have Coronavirus (sorry to those who haven't been so lucky)
- Hearing that all of the Denver animal shelters have gotten their cats and dogs adopted
- Looking through old papers and pictures has given me a chance to reflect on many forgotten good times
- Saving money
- Eating meals together
- I painted my kitchen!
- Play guess the song title with friends and family over Zoom
- We are learning to be dependent on each other rather than our kids being totally dependent on us
- Family members graduating from school and being awarded scholarships
- Getting to wait to open my bill from your office and delaying payment by a day or two ;) (there were a few jokers in our practice)
- Working from home
- I feel more thankful to doctors and nurses globally who are risking their lives everyday (we didn't ask anyone to say this, but thank you to all healthcare workers)
- I DID learn to knit, working on Afghan blocks
- Yoga on the balcony
- Spending time with my new puppy (pictures please!)
- Learning to use my Instant Pot
- Starting to see people care for each other and come together as a community
- Giving us a chance to think about how we are poisoning the earth for greed, and how we need to treat each other without judgment and with more kindness

- Friends and family checking in to make sure I am okay
- Eating better and losing some weight
- I am able to pay my bills
- I discovered spaghetti squash, which was accidentally delivered
- We are extremely happy that we enrolled in Mellman & Guerrasio's concierge practice (I didn't make that up)
- Finally using up the stuff in my freezer
- Family dropped off homemade meals for me
- Taking classes on the Internet
- I've begun to work on a tapestry
- Writing poetry
- Sending cards to remind others they are thought of
- Grocery shopping for others
- Doing anything to brighten someone else's day
- My hair is not as gray as I thought it was! Yay!
- Contributing to Feed the Fight
- Reinforces the need to have hobbies
- Sights of families walking together
- My tighty-whitey mask may or may not stop the virus, but it definitely helps with social distancing
- My spouse looks cute in their blue kerchief nose and mouth cover.
- Learning to appreciate my child more and other helpers
- Clean air and water

If you want to stop here for now and soak it all in, please do. The rest of the email is more serious, as we will be answering your medical questions.

Questions from you for Dave and I:

- 1. What is the safe number of family members to get together if everyone has been in self-isolation for fourteen days? Our ages range from under three to 93 years old.**
There is no magic safe number. Limit your interactions to just the people that you live with. While self-isolation limits the spread of COVID 19, it does not completely prevent its spread. Even if you have been in self-isolation, there is no guarantee that you or others haven't picked up the virus at the grocery store, the gas station, or the park.
- 2. Do you think it is still safe for people over 65 to go outside to take a walk as long as they stay six feet away from other pedestrians?**
Balancing all risks and benefits, we agree that you should go outside and take walks regardless of your age. Please avoid crowds. It is okay to occasionally pass another pedestrian from greater than 6 feet away, but don't walk in an area so crowded that people are continuously 6 feet around you.

3. Do you have to wait for any length of time before crossing the path of a person after they have passed by?

There is no data to specifically answer this question. Our best advice is that if someone just coughed or sneezed without a mask avoid a greater than 24 feet radius for 10 minutes. If someone just coughed or sneezed with a mask avoid a greater than 6 feet radius for 10 minutes.

4. Is it necessary to disinfect groceries?

Currently, there is no evidence that COVID 19 is transmitted by food. Wash your hand frequently – upon return from the grocery store, before and after putting groceries away, before cooking and eating. If you wish to be extra cautious, wipe down containers/boxes with disinfectant wipes. Wash fruits and vegetables under cold water, while rubbing them clean. Then dry them with a paper towel or clean towel. Do not use soap, detergents or chemicals as they will make you ill.

5. Do you recommend asymptomatic people wear face masks when going to the grocery store? Are the masks intended to keep you from potentially infecting others or keep you from being infected?

Yes. The answer to the second question is both. Masks are much more effective at preventing spread of disease when the sick person is wearing the mask. Since many sick people are asymptomatic, all people should wear masks. Masks are especially important now that it is allergy season and people are sneezing more. Those with allergies could become super-spreaders.

6. Can I get the virus from breathing the air in the elevator?

Yes. Take the stair if possible (unless you live on the 15th floor). Wear a mask and wash your hands after touching the buttons.

7. What does PCS stand for and what level of PCS mask do you recommend?

I think it just means pieces, as in number of masks. Healthcare workers should wear N95, N99, N100, R95, R99, R100 or P 95, P99, P100 masks. Please, please, please... please save them for healthcare workers.

No matter what type of mask you are wearing. Nearly 100% of people I have seen in the community are wearing their masks incorrectly. THE most important thing is to wear it correctly – no beard, it must cover the nose, use both straps in the appropriate locations for your mask, and pinch the nose clip tight around the bridge of your nose if you have a flexible wire/metal bar in the mask. Once you put it on, don't touch it or move it until you take it off... this breaks the seals and stretches out the elastic ties. If you are not wearing them correctly, you are wasting them and there are not enough of them to be wasted.

8. Is there any test that can show if you have had the virus in the past months?

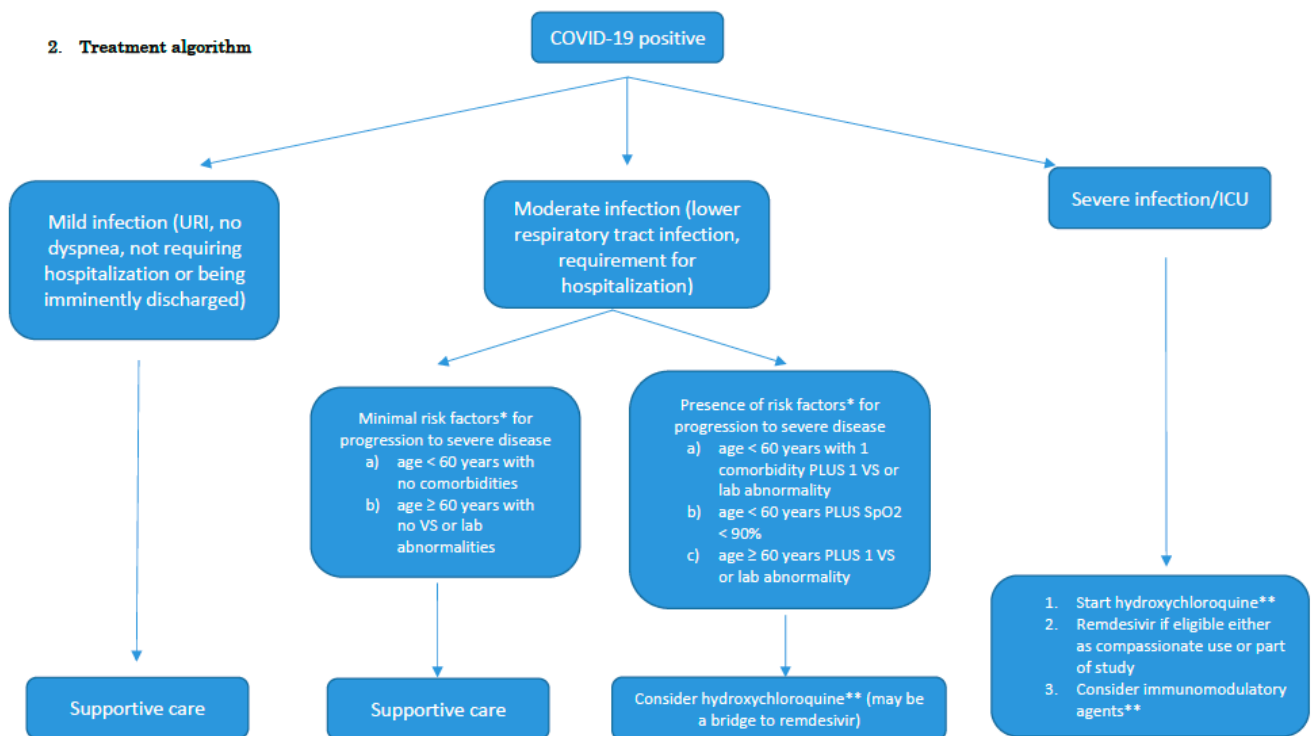
Yes, there is now a blood test that can look for 2 different COVID 19 antibodies – IgM and IgG. If you have had COVID 19 any time in the past, the IgG test will be positive. If you

currently have COVID 19 IgM will be positive. For the scientists, the sensitivity of the nasal swab is ~62% with IgM testing the sensitivity is ~96%. IgM reported appears as early as 24 hours after symptoms. More on where to get the test below...

9. What is Colorado Center of Medical Excellence’s ability to test, and do you see your ability to test increasing? What are the current testing capabilities in Denver?

In a short period of time, we are hoping to be able to do antibody testing. Rose Medical Center hospital, as most hospitals, is testing inpatients and staff only.

10. Can you provide an update on clinical trial results for treatment?



***Risk factors:** Age ≥ 60 years, HTN, DM, CVD, Pulmonary disease, Immunosuppression (transplant, poorly controlled HIV, other immunosuppressive medications), obesity with BMI ≥ 40 kg/m², CKD. **VS abnormalities:** SpO₂ < 90% on room air, RR > 24 breaths/min, HR > 124 beats/min. **Lab abnormalities:** D-dimer > 1 µg/mL, LDH > 245 U/L, ferritin > 300 ng/mL, lymphopenia with absolute lymphocyte count < 0.8 (10³ per µL), HS-troponin > 28 ng/L, CK > 185 U/L, Cr > 1.5 mg/dL, CXR or CT with consolidation and GGOs (more likely in severe patients)
****hydroxychloroquine dose:** 600 mg orally BID x1 (load) on day 1, then 400 mg orally daily on days 2-5. When discharging a patient, be aware that they will likely NOT be able to fill a prescription for hydroxychloroquine.
*****such as IFN, IL6 blockers in conjunction with critical care/pulmonology and ID consultation)**

- ACE-inhibitors and ARBS – Blood pressure medicines ending in -pril or -artan.
 - If you are taking them, continue to take them. Do not add them, unless otherwise clinically indicated for a disease other than COVID 19.
- Steroids
 - Can delay clearance of the viruses. Do not stop using them if you are on them without talking to us. But they will not be used to treat COVID 19.
- NSAIDs – like Advil, ibuprofen, Aleve, naproxen

- Initially theorized to worsen COVID 19 symptoms
- But, there is no clinical data to support this. Patients taking Tylenol versus ibuprofen had the same outcomes.
- Hydroxychloroquine –
 - Multiple clinical trials underway for hydroxychloroquine with and without azithromycin (Zpak) and Remdesivir
 - Hydroxychloroquine may improve lung image findings and shorten course of disease, some studies say yes, some no. All studies to date have been too small to make accurate conclusions.
 - Data with azithromycin shows less virus in the nasal passage, but not necessarily better clinical outcomes unless patients develop a bacterial pneumonia on top of COVID 19.
 - Hydroxychloroquine and Remdesivir trials are currently underway and we heard that the benefits are marginal at best.
- Tocilizumab and Sarilumab
 - Trials underway for these human monoclonal antibodies against IL-6 receptors
 - Very small study showed improved oxygenation, CT findings and inflammatory markers
 - Is being used experimentally for hospitalized patients with low oxygen and presence of hyperinflammation
- Lopinavir/ritonavir
 - Studied and proven not helpful
- High dose Vitamin C
 - Studied and proven not helpful
- BCG vaccine
 - Little evidence yet that it will block COVID 19, though it has blocked other respiratory viruses in the past in children and the elderly. Clinical trials have begun
- 20+ other medications are currently being studied

11. How do you make masks?

Without pocket and ties: https://www.instructables.com/id/AB-Mask-for-a-Nurse-by-a-Nurse/?fbclid=IwAR1ffMfBf4GuGWeBU214N5_DjLIN8myqr0DU_imNxUFWmlFxEuXv4Rr9aL

Check out YouTube for other options, such as masks with pockets for filters

12. How many people are Dr. Mellman and Guerrasio seeing actually get the disease?

About 25 so far.

13. What is the course of the disease like?

- The time from exposure to illness averages about 5-6 days.
- The early symptoms may include fever, fatigue, dry cough, chest tightness, burning in the chest/throat with breathing. Some also have reported body aches, nausea,

loss of smell and taste, diarrhea. This is the acute mild phase and many people recover after this (about 10 days).

- Some go on to have a prolonged inflammatory response with high fevers lasting 2-3 weeks, dry cough, chest tightness and burning.
- Few become hypoxic, need oxygen and hospital admission.

14. What if YOU get sick, who is going to handle the patient load?

We are trying to distance ourselves from each other (ie. no longer sharing the same phone, less time in the same office space, increased cleaning of our work space) so that if one of us gets sick, the other can step in and take care of the patients. Thankfully we are a two-person team. If both of us were to get sick, we do have other highly respected physicians who would be able to cover for us.

15. Are the hospitals really overloaded?

Hospitals are full most days without COVID 19. So yes, they are feeling the pressure of having more acutely sick patients than usual. At this time, Rose Hospital has cancelled all elective procedures and surgeries freeing up extra beds and ventilators. This helps, but acutely sick patients are much harder to care for than patients after elective surgeries and their hospital courses are longer and much more unpredictable, adding stress to the system. Currently, Rose as well as the surrounding Denver hospitals have enough beds and ventilators.

16. How to find people who will shop for you?

Good question... perhaps our patients will have suggestions. You might want to try Seniors Helping Seniors or Next Door. Some service businesses (cleaning services, nannies, etc) that are looking for work may be willing to shop for you.

17. Where can I find preventative medications for my immune system like zinc, elderberry, etc?

Stop! Before you get too invested in medications for the immune system, let's revisit question 14 about how COVID 19 affects the body. While the virus is miserable, it is the prolonged inflammatory response that is the most dangerous and leads to shock and a deadly lung condition call acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). You may not want to be ramping up your immune system, as it is an over active response from the immune system that leads to patient deaths. Zinc fine. I would avoid all the others, some of which, like elderberry, have been shown to make people worse.

18. Where can I donate blood?

Bonfils is now Vitalant, and you can donate blood by appointment. There are several locations, and a mobile unit. The location in Denver is at 717 Yosemite St Denver 80230. Go to [Vitalant.org](https://www.vitalant.org) for more information about locations and the mobile unit or call 877-25-VITAL.

So that this email doesn't end on a heavy note, please go back to the positive list and read it again. Which ones do you relate to? Perhaps you have a few new ideas of things you want to reflect on or include in your days. Find ways to appreciate having some down time to rediscover what is most important to you.

As always, we are here whenever you need us.

Best wishes, be well and don't forget... personal distancing!

Jeannette and Dave

David L Mellman MD & Jeannette Guerrasio MD
David L Mellman MD, PLLC

