

March 15, 2020-

Per Recommendations from the Vermont Department of Health, we are recommending all patients that are comfortable having appropriate follow up visits via Telemedicine consider doing so.

You can call our office to request your already scheduled visit be converted to a Telemedicine visit, or when scheduling a new visit, request that it be Telemedicine. This is covered by insurance the same way an in person visit is. It is very simple and our staff will happily explain it to you. You can use your home computer, laptop, i-pad, or even smart phone as long as you have adequate cell service or internet. You will get an email giving you a link to Doxy.me which is our HIPAA compliant Telemedicine service. You will then follow the link and log in and wait until your doctor initiates the call. Make sure your volume is up and your camera is active, although most devices will take care of the camera automatically.

Corona Virus Update

Corona Virus appears to be presenting as a sore throat with fever and eventually difficulty breathing and a mild to moderate dry cough. The average incubation period (the time from when you are exposed to when you start to feel symptoms) is about 5 days but can be 2-14 days. People are very contagious during the incubation period because they are shedding virus but are unaware of being infected. Many people experience very mild or even no symptoms at all, especially people under 20 years old. These people can however still spread the infection just as easily as symptomatic people can. At this point there are only single digits in confirmed cases in Vermont, and 150+ people who have tested negative. We expect all of these numbers to rise dramatically in the coming weeks as this becomes more wide spread in Vermont, and as testing becomes more available.

At this point people who think they need to be tested are instructed to call their Primary Care Doctor's office. We have a screening algorithm from the Department of Health and will see if you meet criteria. Then we must coordinate with the department of health to get your testing approved and finally contact your local hospital to coordinate the testing once it is approved by the Department of Health. Unfortunately, we have also learned that CVMC has very limited test kits

available and are reserving them for people who are quite ill and people with no symptoms or mild to moderate symptoms are being encouraged to stay home and self quarantine until more test kits become available, hopefully this week. I understand that they are working on setting up a "command center" so patients can start contacting them directly, and take us primary care providers out of the process to make it more efficient.

We will try to do as much of the corona virus screening as a telemedicine visit as we can, but there may be some circumstances where it is done over the phone by our administrative staff. We will not be doing this screening in person, and ask that if you think you need to be tested, do not come to the office.

Steps we are taking to protect our patients and ourselves.

While we are encouraging patients to utilize telemedicine whenever possible, we will continue to see patients in person at our office. There are many types of visits that would be impossible to do via telemedicine, and there are individuals who lack the internet access or privacy or technological savviness to utilize telemedicine. We are exploring options for making our clinic flow make this as safe, comfortable, and functional as possible. This is a fluid process and we are still figuring it out.

We will have a designated treatment room for seeing people who are sick (people who are suspicious for corona virus will have been pre-screened and will not come to the office). We are also exploring a separate waiting room for people who are sick, or possibly asking them to wait in their cars but notify the front office of their arrival. Providers may be wearing masks at times, and sick patients will be asked to wear a mask which will be provided to them when they arrive. We are frequently sanitizing door knobs and treatment room and waiting room spaces. We are also discouraging walk-ins for supplements, and will likely be limiting hours that our admin staff is working in the office and encouraging them to work from home as much as possible. We will coordinate different ways for patients to coordinate picking up supplements and supplies that they need, and will inform you as we figure this out.

This outbreak has lead to a lot of changes and our staff is under increased stress in handling the demands and implementing the changes. We ask that you try to limit your conversation and questions with staff about the situation because it has become overwhelming for them. Save your questions for your providers. If you have comments that you have not been able to share with your provider, we are going to establish both a physical and electronic way for you to share them that bypasses our admin staff.

Prevention and Treatment

Finally, we are monitoring and exploring what theoretically should be useful to prevent and treat corona virus infection in the early/mild stages to reduce the chances of it progressing to a more severe case. This information is constantly evolving, and supplies likely will not be consistently available, as we have already seen some formulas we like be "out of stock" through our distributors. Again, this is not information we will have our admin staff be sharing over the phone, but providers can educate their patients preferably in telemedicine visits.

Sorry for so much information. We appreciate your patience, understanding, and adaptability during this time. We will continue to do everything we can to provide you with the high quality, innovative, and compassionate health care that I hope you have come to expect at Tree of Life Medicine.

Sincerely,
Gabriel Archdeacon, ND

- Stay at home and rest!*
- Hydrate (drink lots of fluids)!
- Manage high fevers with Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil)
- If your illness is severe, call us as indicated above so we can evaluate your illness and provide more guidance on where to seek higher levels of care if warranted.

*Preventing spread of the virus is a high priority at this time. The advice here is no different than what we have learned about the cold and flu seasons in general when one is symptomatic. If you do need to leave the house, please wear a mask to avoid sharing germs via sneezing, sniffing or blowing!

Some Department of Health Recommendations for prevention are as follows:

- Frequently wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or a tissue, not your hands.
- Stay home when you're sick, especially with a fever.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

From the perspective of Tree of Life's providers, we would add the following:

*Eat wholesome, nutritious foods, and avoid sugar, overly refined foods and alcohol in general. Include cultured/lacto-fermented foods and drinks to maintain a healthy microbiome.

*Consider taking immune enhancing herbs and vitamins. A few common ones are garlic, elderberry, echinacea, North American ginseng, licorice, oregano oil, zinc, vitamin D, vitamin C, mushroom immune complexes, probiotics, and many others.

*Be sure to get adequate sleep, as much as possible. Try not to get too depleted.

*Fresh air and sunshine are beneficial in general, and good indoor air quality, too.

*Moderate exercise is beneficial.

*Try to stay in a positive frame of mind. Use stress reduction and mindfulness techniques that work for you, frequently.

*If you smoke, work on quitting or reducing this as it makes the lungs more vulnerable to illness.

If you think you might have been exposed to the virus or have other concerns about exposure, please call your State Health department.

Vermont Department of Health: (802)863-7240

Finally, while we know the news about coronavirus is scary, it's important that we avoid panic while acting prudently. More will be known about the whole situation, day by day, helping to allay unfounded fears that form in the absence of solid facts, and hopefully providing better and better guidance about how to avoid and treat this illness.

Part of the concern is that not enough is known about the new coronavirus, and unlike the seasonal flu, researchers don't know what to expect.

As of right now, there have been 647 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the US and 26 deaths. As with all flu-like illnesses, people with underlying immune deficiencies, chronic illness and the elderly are at greatest risk.

Prevention and good hygiene are key. So, please take good care of yourselves and your loved ones.