

Communiqué to our community: COVID-19

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COVID-19 pandemic changes and challenges

The social, economic and medical systems and services changes caused by COVID-19 are causing significant concern and anxiety among the residents of Renfrew County. We'd like to help answer those concerns.

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a coronavirus, very similar to the virus responsible for (SARS) which affected Ontario and the world in 2002. Although all health care facilities within Canada prepared for it, only a few areas were actually affected by the virus.

COVID-19 has turned out to be much more infectious (it is easily spread with some infected people spreading the virus before they experience symptoms), but not nearly as deadly as SARS. A small proportion of people infected will become very sick and require hospitalization and advanced care.

The majority of people who will be infected by COVID-19 will experience "cold" or mild flu-like symptoms and will be just fine. Going into the future, COVID-19 will become part of our seasonal flu cycle and up to 70% of us will be infected within three years. The symptoms of a Covid-19 infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath, headache, sore throat, muscle pain and diarrhea.

Remember this mnemonic:

Wash your hands for at least 30 seconds

Avoid touching your face

Sterilize all contact surfaces/social distances of 2 meters or 6 feet

Have you travelled or have respiratory symptoms
– self isolate for 14 days

The current crisis facing our health care system

Imagine all the people in a region that get sick and require advanced medical care over a one-year period from seasonal influenza... Now imagine a similar number people getting sick and requiring advanced medical care over just a two-month period. This is what is happening when COVID-19 sweeps through a community.

This is the "surge" you read about in the media, which can overwhelm local health care services.

There is no treatment for mild to moderate cases of the COVID-19 virus.

"Our goal in weathering this surge is to try to minimize and limit the number of Covid-19 infections occurring over a short period to time. We know COVID-19 is present in all of our communities at this time," says Dr. Kristan Davis, RVH Director of ED.

Limiting Covid-19 infections is done by implementing all the advice you have been hearing about from our government and local public health care systems:

- follow good personal hygiene practices
- engage in social distancing
- self-isolate if coming back from foreign travel, or if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- support neighbors and at-risk seniors you are aware of
- limit the use of local emergency and hospital services for non-emergent issues

"By following this advice you limit the spread of the virus and will dramatically reduce the number of people who become infected, which helps to increase the capacity of local health care services to meet and manage the upcoming surge," notes Davis.

"At RVH, our main goals are to provide guidance and support to our community and provide medical services for those infected with COVID-19 requiring advanced medical care. At the same we want to ensure all the non-COVID-19-related emergent medical issues, which will continue to occur, are still being attended to," states Dr. Steve Radke, RVH Chief of Staff.