

March 2020

***Open Message from Director Ursel McElroy
To Ohioans About Coronavirus (COVID-19)***

Dear Residents, Caregivers and Service Providers,

In the past few weeks, attention has been focused on a very important population – older Ohioans – and the risks posed by Coronavirus (COVID-19). As the loved ones, caregivers, and service providers for older Ohioans, you are in an equally important role – that is, keeping them and yourselves healthy during the season of this virus.

The Ohio Department of Aging has created this web page to provide updates and information as you are caring for or providing services for older Ohioans. The State of Ohio has a main web site dedicated to addressing all issues related to the virus: www.coronavirus.ohio.gov.



To prevent the spread of the disease, the Ohio Department of Health advises that every Ohioan be proactive to prevent the **introduction** of respiratory germs as well as prevent the spread of respiratory germs **between** people. Keeping up-to-date about COVID-19 is also very important. I want to share information to assist you in your caregiving roles and provide resources that you can monitor for reliable information.

Family and Caregiver Support of Older Adults:

- Know what medications your loved one is taking and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
 - Monitor food and other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
 - Stock up on non-perishable food items to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
 - If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.
- Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

Preparation Tips:

- **Two-weeks supply:** Keep enough food and medication in the home to last for at least two weeks.

Fostering sound public policy, research, and initiatives that benefit older Ohioans.

- **Plan ahead for closures:** Have plans in place should facilities you need close.
- **Anticipate closures and cancellations:** Prepare for the possible cancellation or postponement of large community events.

Source: Ohio Department of Health:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/resources/how-you-can-prevent-and-prepare>

Prevention Tips:

- **Hand washing:** Exercise good hand-washing techniques. Wash your hands for 20 seconds or more with soapy water several times a day.
- **Hand sanitizers:** If soap and water is unavailable, encourage good hand hygiene by using alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- **Hands off:** Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Coughing and sneezing etiquette:** Practice cough and sneeze etiquette by doing so into closed elbows and washing hands afterward.
- **Stay home if sick:** If the person you care for is sick, or you are sick, stay home except to visit a health care professional. Avoid close contact with others and discourage sick visitors to help prevent the spread of infection. If a loved one is unable to visit, use email, phone calls, or FaceTime, or ask a healthy friend or family member to drop by for a visit or to deliver a note.
- **Disinfect:** Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces each day.

Source: Ohio Department of Health:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/resources/Preventing-Infectious-Disease>

COVID-19 Symptoms:

- They generally appear two to 14 days after exposure.
- They can include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Most people who become sick do not require hospitalization, but older adults, people with chronic health conditions, and people with compromised immune systems are more likely to require more advanced care.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

State of Ohio Coronavirus Resources:

The Ohio Department of Health has established two important tools to assist in the flow of information:

- **Web site dedicated to Coronavirus updates in Ohio:** www.coronavirus.ohio.gov
This web site is updated at 2 p.m. daily.
- **Call Center:** 1-833-4-ASK-ODH / 1-833-427-5634 Ohio Department of Health
Operates daily from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- **Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman:** 1-800-282-1206,
OhioOmbudsman@age.ohio.gov

By keeping current about COVID-19 and being mindful of precautions, we can protect older Ohioans and our most vulnerable residents from the virus. I assure you that the staff of the Ohio Department of Aging is working diligently and together with Governor Mike DeWine, the Ohio Department of Health, Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging, and our network of aging service providers to help prevent the spread of coronavirus to Ohio's older adults.

We are grateful for the efforts that you're undertaking to prepare and support your loved ones during this time. In the event you have any questions, I encourage you to contact the ODH Call Center, listed above.

Sincerely,

Ursel McElroy
Director