

HEALTHY OUTCOMES

Suspect (or know) you have COVID-19? Self-isolation at home is critical.

By Geisinger Wellness | Published Apr. 2, 2020

Whether you're waiting to be tested for COVID-19, you're waiting for your test results or you've tested positive, isolating yourself at home is the key to protecting everyone around you

If you're already sick, self-isolation is meant to keep a person who is infected away from anyone who isn't infected. This applies whether you have tested positive for COVID-19 or if you have symptoms but haven't been tested yet.

To help protect your health, and the health of everyone around you, you should practice self-isolation when:

- You are sick but haven't been tested
- Are awaiting your test results
- Have tested positive for COVID-19

First, do I need to get tested for COVID-19?

Most people won't need to be tested for COVID-19 unless they have symptoms of respiratory illness.

This is because, outside of health-related risk factors, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has outlined guidelines for health providers (including Geisinger) to prioritize COVID-19 testing for:

- Those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever (38° C or 100.4° F or higher), a new cough or shortness of breath and
- Those have been in close contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19 or who has had a laboratory-confirmed positive test

(Continued on page 3)

Inside This Issue:

- [Suspect you have COVID-19?](#)
- [Stay healthy by washing your hands](#)
- [Links to COVID-19 Info](#)
- [AID in PA](#)
- [Are you feeling lonely?](#)

The HCQU works with intellectual disabilities and behavioral health programs in Central PA to provide health care management services for adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities or Autism. Our goal is that all people living in PA, regardless of ability, receive the finest community services available – assuring that they are as healthy as possible and can fully participate in community life. The HCQU works to enhance access to community physical and mental health care through **FREE** education, public health outreach, advocacy and empowerment as well as to improve health care outcomes. Serving the following counties: Blair, Centre, Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union, Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata, Lycoming/Clinton, Northumberland and Schuylkill.

Stay healthy by washing your hands

By Geisinger Wellness | March 18, 2020

No matter the time of year, it's always important to remember to properly wash our hands. Doing our part with proper hygiene can help to slow and even stop the spread of diseases.

“Kids aren’t the only ones absentmindedly putting their hands into their mouth, and washing your hands for just 20 seconds can stop viruses like the cold or flu,” says Dr. Christian Shuman, a family doctor at Geisinger Pottsville. “It’s is an easy way to protect ourselves from many common illnesses, while also slowing the spread to others.”

Not only are we protecting ourselves when we wash our hands, but we're protecting everyone around us who we come into contact with.

How to wash your hands

Proper handwashing is defined as a **vigorous 20-second scrub with soap and warm water** that extends beyond the hands to the wrists, between the fingers and under the fingernails.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends that you **avoid touching the faucet or bathroom door** with newly cleaned hands and instead use a paper towel.

Links to Information about COVID-19 and other useful links

<https://www.aadmd.org/coronavirus-center>

<https://aidinpa.org/>

<https://themighty.com/2020/03/online-events-for-people-stuck-inside-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

<https://www.myodp.org>

www.geisinger.org/hcqu

<https://www.pa.gov/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>



“Germs are more resilient than we think,” says Dr. Shuman. “A short rinse or scrub without soap may leave some illness-causing germs behind.” Plus, our hands act as carriers for the germs, transporting them between surfaces.

Why is it important to wash your hands?

Those resilient germs that will survive a brief wash can also survive a light cleaning. Public spaces like trains, subways, buses, hotel lobbies and taxi cabs are a major source of germs, as well as our own kitchens and bathrooms. This is why it’s important to clean with a disinfectant, too.

(continued on page 5)

Suspect COVID-19?...

(Continued from page 1)

Self-isolation: How to do it right

The only time you should leave your home if you aren't feeling well is to seek medical care. The best thing you can do if you're sick — with a bad cold, the flu or COVID-19 — is stay home and self-isolate.

Here's how to do that:

- **Quarantine yourself at home.** Stay in a single room away from others. Use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if available.
- **Don't share personal household items.** Use your own set of dishes, utensils, towels, bedding and other household items. Wash them thoroughly after use.
- **Clean all "high-touch" surfaces** in your home daily, including counters, tables, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, phones, keyboards and tablets.
- **Clean your hands thoroughly and frequently.** Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues into a lined trash can, then wash your hands right away.
- Tell anyone else that you've been in contact with that you may have contracted COVID-19. They should follow the recommenda-



tions above and monitor their health for any signs of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath).

Note: Self-isolation is different than self-quarantine (self-quarantining is staying at home and not going out in public but remaining physically close to your household members).

Monitor your symptoms

For most people, symptoms will lessen over time with self-care. However, you should head to the nearest hospital ER if your symptoms are severe, worsen or if you have difficulty breathing.

Emergency symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Bluish lips or skin
- Sudden confusion or inability to awaken

If you experience any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately.

**Geisinger
COVID-19 hotline**

570-284-3657 

Call our 24/7 hotline for answers about care recommendations and more.

Visit [Geisinger's Coronavirus Resource Center](#) for the latest information and helpful resources. ■

AID in PA

AID in PA is a resource collection for Pennsylvanians in the autism and intellectual disability communities. A joint effort between ASERT (Autism Services, Education Resources, and Training) and the statewide HCQUs (Health Care Quality Units), this site is designed to connect individuals with disabilities, families, professionals, and community members with resources that can best serve them in emergency situations. Current resources focus on the ongoing COVID-19 crisis; however, this site can be adapted to for other challenges facing the community.

<https://aidinpa.org/>

Central Region PPC Meeting CANCELED

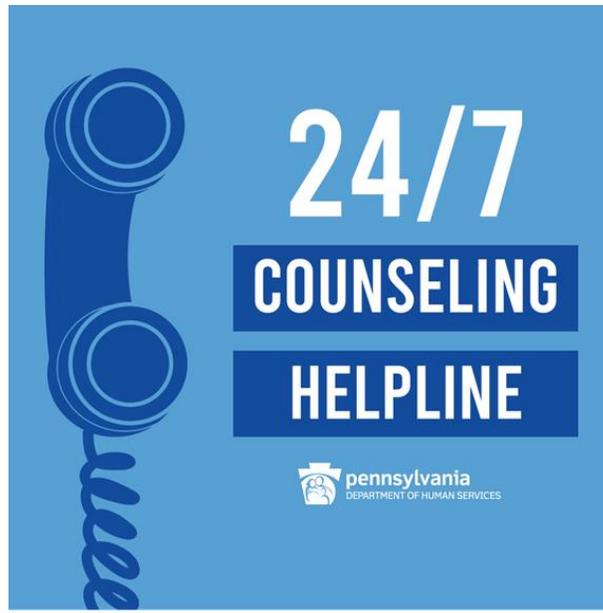
Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the PPC meeting scheduled for April 28, 2020 has been canceled. The June meeting has not been determined yet.

Spring Day of Learning Canceled

In response to growing concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and its potential impact, the Spring Day of Learning scheduled for Thursday May 14th, 2020 at the Geisinger Medical Center Hemelright Auditorium in Danville, PA has been canceled. At this time, we are uncertain if the spring training day agenda will be offered at a later time. Our anticipated Fall Day of Learning date is **October 8th, 2020** with details to follow.

Please check our HCQU web-site at www.geisinger.org/hcqu for further information and updates. ■

Are you feeling lonely? Are you feeling anxious?



The Statewide Support & Referral Helpline is staffed by skilled and compassionate staff that are available 24/7 to respond to those struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions due to the COVID-19 emergency. Staff at the Helpline refer callers to community-based resources that can further help to meet individual needs.

*The toll-free, round-the-clock support line is officially operational.
The number to call is 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600.*

The Helpline was created by the Department of Human Services DHS and the [Center for Community Resources](#) (CCR). Helpline staff are trained to be accessible, culturally competent, and skilled at assisting individuals in the ID/A community as well as anyone else who might have a need – teens, adults, special populations and their supporters. Staff use the principles of trauma-informed care to listen, assess needs, triage calls, and provide appropriate referral to community resources to children, teens, adults and special populations.

CCR will collaborate with individuals, families, police, emergency medical teams, hospitals, schools, and human service providers on the local level to provide quality care to their community members.

Many other resources also remain available to Pennsylvanians in need of support, including:

- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)*
- *Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio: 1-888-628-9454*
- *Crisis Text Line: Text “PA” to 741-741*
- *Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)*
- *Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990*
- *Get Help Now Hotline (for substance use disorders): 1-800-662-4357*
- *Pennsylvania Sexual Assault Helpline – 1-888-772-7227*
- *National Domestic Violence Helpline – 1-800-799-7233*

Visit the PA Department of Health’s dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

To access ODP-specific information, visit ODP’s Coronavirus Page at: <https://www.myodp.org/mod/page/view.php?id=26808>.

Wash Your Hands...

(Continued from page 2)

Without regular hand washing, germs can get into your body while you're eating or drinking. We often touch our face, eyes, nose and mouth without even thinking about it during the day. This contact releases the germs into our body, challenging the immune system.

“Nail biting is a common problem for many adults, and that act gives germs a bridge from your hands to your mouth,” says Dr. Shuman. “While breaking this habit can take time, keeping your hands clean is a good first step.”

And remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Germs can become airborne thanks to an uncovered cough or sneeze, leaving them on surfaces, clothing or causing us to breathe them in.

Stop the spread of germs

Common colds are the most common cause of sick days in both adults and children. Most people get colds in the winter and spring, but they can come year-round and are marked by seven to 10 days of sore throat, coughing, sneezing, headaches and body aches. However, they can be prevented with a few more seconds at the bathroom sink.

“Research suggests that as many as 45 percent of colds can be prevented with regular hand washing,” says Dr. Shuman.

Stomach bugs, most commonly caused by the Norovirus germ, are marked by the sudden onset of symptoms like vomiting and diarrhea. The bug is most commonly caused by cross-contamination from food and cooking surfaces.

“In addition to washing hands, properly washing food and kitchen surfaces will help prevent stomach bugs,” says Dr. Shuman.

In all, if you aren't near a sink, hand sanitizer is an acceptable option for fighting germs on your hands, but make sure the formula is over 60 percent alcohol.

The flu and respiratory viruses, which are sometimes mistaken for the common cold, share symptoms like coughing, runny nose and body aches. However, the flu comes on much faster than a cold, lasts longer and can sometimes come with serious complications.

If you have symptoms of a cold or flu, the best thing to do is:

- Stay home
- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Keep an eye on your symptoms and call your doctor if they worsen

If you encounter someone with these symptoms, avoid contact and keep your distance.

Certain viruses with these same symptoms can cause more serious respiratory viruses, including a new strain of coronavirus called COVID-19 which can lead to pneumonia and breathing issues.

Symptoms of a COVID-19 infection can resemble that of a cold or flu and typically include a fever, shortness of breath and cough. While most people with COVID-19 will have minimal symptoms and fully recover, those with certain underlying health conditions and who are over age 60 have a higher risk for developing the infection and related complications.

Simply washing your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds can help cut back on the spread of these viruses and protect yourself and others. ■



CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT (HCQU)

Director – Cheryl Callahan RN,
CDDN, 570-271-5935

Secretary – Lesley Murphy,
570-271-7240

Training Coordinator – Patricia
Brofee RN, 570-271-5159

Data Support Analyst – Kristy
Campbell, 570-214-4753

Blair Co. – Sandra Corrigan RN,
CDDN, 814-574-7783

Centre Co. – TBD
570-271-7240

**CMSU (Columbia, Montour, Snyder
and Union Co.)** – Laura
Aungst RN, CDDN,
570-214-1150 ext. 1001124028

**HMJ (Huntington, Mifflin and
Juniata Co.)** – TBD
570-271-5935

Lycoming/Clinton Co. – Eileen
Musgrave RN,
570-214-1150 ext. 1001124027

Northumberland Co. – Amy
Weidner RN,
570-214-1150 ext. 1001124025

Schuylkill Co. – Brandi McIntyre RN,
570-214-1150 ext. 1001124029