



SCHOHARIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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COVID-19 Update 3/25/2020

Brief Overview:

- 1) Schoharie County currently has two confirmed cases of COVID-19. There is an additional case that works at SUNY Cobleskill but lives outside the county.
- 2) It is critical to protect our health care system and loved ones by practicing social distancing.
- 3) It is likely that the need to continue social distancing will continue for a minimum of 1-2 months and there is a good chance that it will last longer.
- 4) If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you and anyone in your household should stay in self-quarantine. You should call your physician or the Bassett triage line (607-547-5555) for more information. Call 911 and advise them that you suspect that you have COVID-19 if you are in an emergency situation.
- 5) Please support our local businesses in any safe way that you can during this period. They are struggling right now.

Full Discussion of Current Situation:

We currently have two confirmed cases and an additional case in one individual who works at SUNY but lives in another county. We also have around 30 individuals in quarantine. I am confident that our numbers in Schoharie County would be much higher if testing were available. The supplies for testing are currently in critically short supply across the region and we are not able to test people for COVID-19 even if they are symptomatic and we believe that there is a high likelihood that they would test positive. When supplies become available, testing will increase and the local numbers will also increase.

EVERYONE should be staying home and practicing social distancing right now. If you are able to stay home or work from home, your civic duty right now is to limit your contact with others. People should ONLY be associating with individuals who LIVE IN YOUR HOME. You should not be getting together with friends or even close family members who do not live in your home. Go out for necessary items but minimize the number of trips and wash hands carefully with soap before and after. Use hand sanitizer while you are out. Do not touch your face.

If you have to work (and many of us are essential and must work), practice social distancing within your workplace, clean your hands regularly, and don't touch your face. Even at the Health Department, we have dramatically reduced our staffing and are also maintaining distancing and hand hygiene within our workspace. When you are not working, limit the number of people that you are in contact with to only those who live in your home.

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I know that social distancing gets really OLD, really fast! I know that your kids are making you absolutely crazy. I know that it doesn't seem like a big risk to get together with a friend or family member or to have a play-date, but the success of this effort depends on EVERYONE doing their best to hold fast to social distancing to the maximum amount they are able. Remember that you are in a direct chain of exposure with ALL the other people that have been in contact with the person you chose to have contact with. Assume that everyone you are in contact with will develop symptoms later today. Assume that YOU will develop symptoms later today and are at risk of transmitting COVID-19 to the person that you love most in this world. When an individual carefully follows guidance for social isolation, they are at a lower risk of contracting COVID-19 and, if they do, there are only a few people who were at increased risk.

The goal is "fifteen days to flatten the curve." I want to clarify what that means. Once social distancing efforts are in place, it takes at least 15 days to know if they are impacting the rate at which COVID-19 is spreading. Prior to the 15 day mark, the cases that are being diagnosed had an exposure before social distancing was in effect, because this disease has an incubation period that can be up to 14 days long. AFTER 15 days of social distancing the hope is that the transmission rate will show a significant drop. If we see that drop, it is NOT a cue that we can stop social distancing. It is a sign that what we are doing is working and we must continue to do it. Please understand that we are expecting that this effort will need to be maintained for several months. Find a routine that works for you. Find ways to stay connected with loved ones and friends without being in the same place. Read stories over the phone. Set up a zoom meeting to knit with a friend. Find an online class. Cook something that you don't normally have time to do. Get out that jigsaw puzzle. Make a rainbow for your window for other people to see when they are out on their walks (google #518 rainbows). Move your body each day (Just take a walk around the block or there are lots of on-line exercise classes popping up). Garden. Get some sunshine whenever you can. Do whatever makes you feel happy and whole. Settle in for a while. It's going to be OK, but right now it's hard.

If we don't flatten the curve, our medical system will be overwhelmed with the influx of COVID-19 cases that need a higher level of care. The people who have more serious cases may not have rooms and ventilators available to them. Medical care may not be available for other life threatening health conditions. Our doctors and nurses will be overworked and overwhelmed. It is likely that they will get sick as they are caring for COVID-19 patients. We've seen what has happened in other parts of the world and can predict the likely impact here. Right now we're just trying to slow this down and spread it out so that as many people as possible are able to get the lifesaving medical care that they need.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath), you should isolate yourself to the best of your ability. If you are able to, you should have your own room and bathroom. You should stay in that space, even for meals. Seriously limit your contact with other people within your household. Members of your household should strongly consider self-quarantining. Ask a neighbor or friend to purchase any needed items and leave them outside your house. It is very likely that you will be able to recover from COVID-19 in the same way that you recover from other illnesses. That said, 13% of people in NY require hospitalization and 24% of those who are hospitalized need an ICU bed. If your condition becomes worse and you are having trouble breathing, you should reach out to your primary care office or the Bassett triage

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line at 607-547-5555 for advice. If the situation is an emergency, please call 911 and advise them that you believe that your situation is COVID-19 related.

One last thing...

If you are able to support our local businesses right now, please do so. Many of them have altered their business practices to allow them to continue to provide some services in a safe way that maintains social distancing. Please take advantage of those options as you are able to. A lot of our small businesses are really struggling through this.

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