

We, as North Dakota Physicians, remain committed to partnering with you, our patients, to work toward us all becoming the best version of ourselves. As physicians, we recognize the importance of caring for the whole self to optimize health. In times of crisis, like this pandemic, this is more important now than ever. We would like to provide the following health recommendations for our fellow citizens during this time of pandemic:

- Adequate sleep is essential- Most adults require at least 7-8 hours of sleep/night. The amount of required nightly sleep increases as age decreases. It is very difficult to keep your mind and body healthy without adequate sleep.
- Proper nutrition is essential- Eating a well-balanced diet that includes plenty of servings of fruits and vegetables with caloric intake and portion sizes that reflect calories burned will help you maintain (gain if you are a child) appropriate weight. Supplementation with a daily multivitamin and up to 1000 IU vitamin D, if not instructed otherwise, may help to safely boost those co-factor levels that are not readily available through your diet, sunlight exposure etc.
- Daily exercise is essential- Movement is medicine. It is important to move your body throughout the day, every day. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a minimum of 1 hour of active play each day. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly. Emotional stress resulting from this pandemic can in part be dissipated by releasing some of that negative energy via physical activity.
- Managing our “interior” life is essential. Depending upon your beliefs, this may be achieved in prayer/worship, yoga, meditation, and/or mindfulness techniques.
- Avoidance of excessive substance use or return to unhealthy/addictive behaviors is essential during this time of stress. While this may serve as a temporary way to deal with negative stress, this pandemic has been and will be around for a while. Hence, this band aid approach will not work for management of long-term stress, thus increasing risk for substance abuse/dependence. In addition to drugs and alcohol, remember that excessive food intake can also provide immediate comfort/stress relief, but is not a useful chronic stress management tool.

These basic health recommendations, as stated above, are always essential for optimal physical and emotional health. We have additional recommendations specific to optimize health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We believe that reducing your risk of becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, is important for the following reasons:

- If you are a person with underlying conditions, you have an increased risk for severe illness that may lead to death.
- No one knows what the long-term health effects of this virus are. We continue to learn about this 10-month-old virus every day. Choosing to intentionally become infected with this virus is similar to choosing to ingest an unknown mushroom- many types of mushrooms are great for eating, but ingestion of a few species of mushroom may result in liver toxicity that is fatal.
- This virus can result in no symptoms for a person during a time that they may be extremely contagious. This results in the potential spread to vulnerable people who will require hospitalization due to severe illness that may result in death. Ultimately, this drives up death rates and healthcare costs, as well as limits access to healthcare. We all carry the burden of these consequences.

- Infection from Sars-CoV-2 hurts the economy by compromising businesses due to employee infection and quarantine. The potential for increase in insurance costs resulting from cost of care associated with Covid-19 will also significantly impact businesses.

We would like to illustrate the risk for becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 with this simple equation:

Infection = Exposure to Virus x Time

Based on this equation, the following strategies are effective in limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2:

1. Minimize virus in the air we all breathe by:
 - i. Limit crowd density- fewer people per square foot = fewer breaths/sq. foot and less likelihood of infected person in that space
 - ii. Limit time in public places- less time in one spot=less breaths of recirculated air that may contain SARS-CoV-2 virus.
 - iii. Mask use- this reduces (not eliminates) the amount of droplets (which carry the virus) released when you breathe, speak, sing etc. The fewer droplets in the air, the less virus in the air. The greater percentage of people wearing masks in a given setting, the less virus in the air.
 - iv. Increase air exchange/filtration of air- This air movement helps to disperse/dilute the amount of virus in a given air space.
 - v. Stay home and isolate when infected with SARS-CoV-2- This confines your viral air to your small space that is inhabited by only you.
 - vi. Quarantining of those with exposure to an infected person that is significant enough to merit risk of infection has the potential to limit this person's spread of virus through the air to others at a time when this person may be infected and contagious, but not feel symptoms.
2. Minimize virus on surfaces- Note that this is NOT the primary route of transmission, but does contribute to transmission
 - i. Wash your hands frequently
 - ii. Do not touch your face- If you must touch your face, please wash your hands before and after.
 - iii. Frequently disinfect surfaces.
 - iv. Stay home and isolate when infected with SARS-CoV-2- This confines your virally contaminated surfaces to your small space that is inhabited by only you.
 - v. Quarantining of those with exposure to an infected person that is significant enough to merit risk of infection has the potential to limit this person's spread of virus via contaminated surfaces to others at a time when this person may be infected and contagious, but not feel symptoms.

Again, as your North Dakota Physicians, we care deeply about you becoming the best version of yourself. We understand that this pandemic has and continues to present unprecedented stress during an unprecedented time. However, we also understand, appreciate, and never underestimate the resilience of our North Dakota citizens. We are here, with you, as North Dakotans who hope to use this resilience to turn this stressful time into a time of unprecedented healthy growth and development for all North Dakotans. We look forward to our continued partnership with you.