

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit

MEDIA RELEASE

March 20, 2020



Health Unit encourages social distancing in LGL

Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Dr. Tam, gave the following update this week. “We are in a fairly critical period. The rate of infection in Canada is increasing and the effort to slow the spread of the virus to give health systems a fighting chance to be able to treat it must be heightened immediately. Canadians should not gather in groups ...and should stay home entirely as much as possible”.

The approach Dr. Tam is talking about is called “flattening the curve”. This means that we slow down the transmission of the virus among people so that there are fewer cases at a time. This will ensure the health care system will be able to cope with people who become very ill and require hospitalization. About 15% of those who become ill with COVID-19 will have severe disease requiring hospitalization. People at highest risk of severe disease are older and have chronic disease like heart disease or diabetes. The COVID-19 virus is spread through droplets from a cough or sneeze that can travel about 6 feet, and can survive for some time on hard surfaces, so it is essential that everyone practices good respiratory etiquette, and frequently washes common surfaces. “Now is the time for everyone to practice social distancing to decrease the risk of spread of the virus on our communities” according to Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

Within this context, as of March 23, 2020, all offices and service sites of the Health Unit will be closed to walk-in public. We are doing this as an effort to reduce social interaction between people. “The 1-800-660-5853 number will continue and several lines and staff have been added to help take your calls.” reports Dr. Stewart. There will be a listing of the service changes due to COVID-19 response on our website on Monday.

Everyone can contribute to social distancing;

Stay home when sick with mild illness

- People who have travelled internationally, including the States, should self-isolate for 14 days after arrival in the country and watch for symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath. If these symptoms are mild then people can stay at home until 24 hours after symptoms entirely resolve and the 14 day travel self-isolation period is up.

Cancel gatherings

- Cancel gatherings, especially with vulnerable residents, including seniors and people with pre-existing health conditions

Limit, postpone or cancel small social gatherings

- if you can, connect with friends by phone or online, no parties, keep children away from group settings including indoor play dates with other children

Cancel non-essential trips

- Consider if outings are necessary.

For essential trips (e.g. groceries, work)

- Sanitize or wash your hands when entering and exiting buildings
- Avoid long lineups - use tap to pay rather than handling money
- When taking public transit, avoid prolonged close contact with others
- Travel during non-peak hours

Avoid visits to care facilities

- protect vulnerable family members by avoiding visits to long-term care homes, retirement homes and other care settings unless it is absolutely essential

While we go through this time of intense social distancing, it is important to:

Stay physically active

- go for walks or exercise outdoors
- do yoga or aerobics at home

Go outdoors

- Take a walk, go to the park, walk the dog
- Keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from others and stay home when sick
- Greet others with a wave, a bow or a nod (in place of handshakes or hugs)
- After going outside, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Consider alternative ways to work

- Work from home, if feasible
- Facilitate virtual meetings (video or teleconferencing)

As this is an evolving situation, we continue to remind people of the importance of using credible sources to stay informed, and encourage others to do the same. We continue to update our website frequently as new information is confirmed. www.healthunit.org/coronavirus

Connect with LGLhealthunit on Facebook and Twitter for important public health messages and updates.

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For media interviews, contact Susan Healey, Communications Co-ordinator, 613-802-0550