



COVID-19 Vinalhaven Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

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COVID-19 Daily Update 4-8-20

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DEVELOP SYMPTOMS?

We all have a newly acquired consciousness about what is happening in our bodies. Most of us take our temperature at least once a day, and when we sneeze or cough or have a tickle in our throats, we probably think “uh-oh” and become super vigilant about every body ache.

If we do develop a fever, have a cough that is persistent, or a sore throat that is not a tickle, we should call ICMS (207-863-4341) and let the staff know. It is at that time that we should self isolate, even from family members in the same home, until your medical provider determines that it is safe to resume normal life. Normal life today means following the Governor’s Stay Healthy At Home Mandate.

If, however, the symptoms become more severe, the fever is higher, or the cough is more persistent, one of the providers at ICMS will come to your home, fully protected, to further assess your condition and test you for the regular seasonal flu. If that is negative, she or he may test you for Covid-19. That test has to be sent off the island and results are returned in about two days.

For most people with Covid-19, you can stay at home, with symptoms that range from mild to horrible, including a dry, hacking cough, extreme fatigue, and fever. After about seven days, though, if you are in the 80% group, you will start to get better.

If, however, you get worse, and have trouble breathing, your ICMS provider may recommend that you go to a mainland hospital for treatment, and will call 911 to bring in the EMS crew. The ICMS provider will consult with the hospital, and the EMS crew, also in full protective gear, will arrange for transportation. This will be on any of our normal transport routes – plane, ferry, Lifeflight of Maine, and even the Coast Guard.

You may have heard about hospitals being overrun with patients and being unable to take any more. Penbay Medical Center has been working on contingency plans to keep Covid-19 patients separate from others and to be ready to treat higher than usual numbers of patients. Governor Mills announced yesterday that Alternative Care Sites, or ACS, are being set up in Portland and Bangor to accommodate patients if local hospitals are overwhelmed. To date, social distancing and the rural character of our state has kept the spread of the virus to a manageable level. However, the pandemic is neither over nor under control, so preparations for the worst case are being made.

On Vinalhaven, we recognize that our limited treatment resources would be quickly exhausted if we had a rapid increase in the number of very sick patients.

We, too, are making preparations for the worst case scenario that would occur if no hospital or ACS facility could accept our patients. If we suddenly had a lot of patients too sick to be treated at home, but not sick enough to go to a hospital, our ICMS providers might not be able to continually make the rounds at multiple houses. In either of these cases, the Town, in conjunction with ICMS, will open an ACS. This would be an extremely temporary arrangement, and transport off island would occur as soon as it was feasible.

Please understand that neither the Governor nor our Public Health Team expect that our mainland medical facilities will be unable to accommodate all of the Covid-19 patients who require hospitalization. If we don't plan for the event, however, and it occurs, scrambling at the last minute instead of developing a thoughtful, careful program is irresponsible. This is what flattening the curve is all about – staying safe at home helps to ensure that not a lot of people get sick all at the same time. It may not reduce the number of people who become ill, but by spreading the illness over time, we help to ensure that all the people that need help will get help.

As always, please contact the EOC with your questions and for assistance. Subscribe to “Town Alerts” on the Town’s website to automatically receive Daily Updates in your inbox.