

TO YOUR HEALTH

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Cautiously Optimistic

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We live in a world full of microorganisms, most of them are harmless and our bodies fight against them quite effectively. How then, can something so tiny, something not even alive, have such a profound impact on the world?

Viruses cannot survive without a host. When they do find a host, viruses can travel quickly within the body. We've learned a lot about how to prevent COVID-19 over the past few months; efforts like wearing masks, social distancing and hand washing are quite effective. Experts around the world are developing better testing, new treatments and ultimately there will be a vaccine. We see numbers trending down which is largely a reflection of all the mitigation efforts. There are reasons to be cautiously optimistic.

We are now into our fourth month of social distancing and I would venture to say that there are few among us who are not feeling the strain. As the country begins to reopen, the risks increase. A spike in cases is, in fact, expected. In some models a second round, even worse than the first, has been projected for this fall. So how do we move forward with life while staying safe and sane?

Other countries have demonstrated safe ways to reopen so we know it can be done. We need to listen to the advice from health experts, and have hope and faith that the treatments will come. We will get through this together. If we stop now, we may be worse off than when we started.



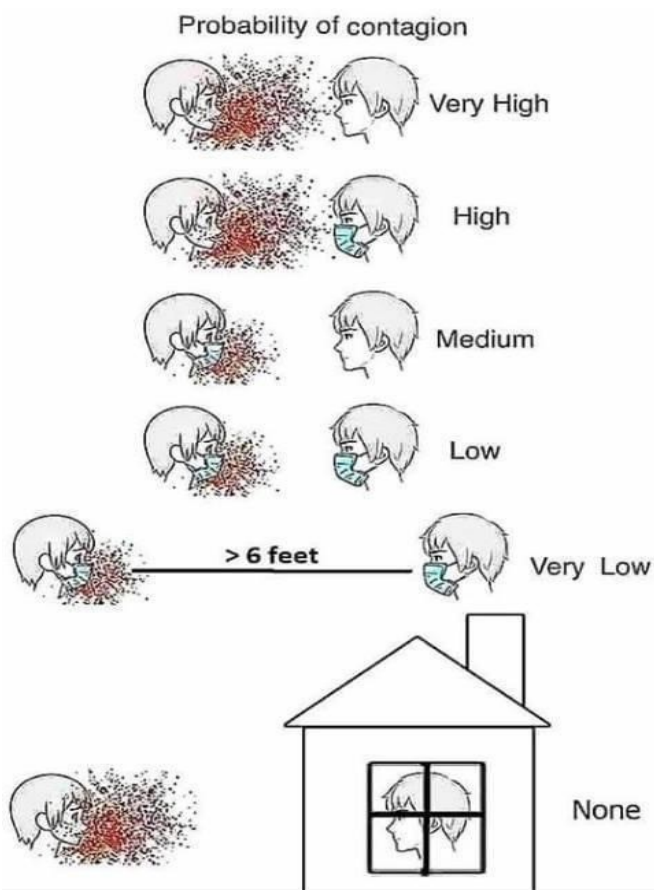
In a recent essay *If The United States Were My Patient*, Dr. Sanjay Gupta describes the treatment he would prescribe to control the spread of COVID-19 in this country. He states "If the country, like the human body, were to get sick or infected, it should seek the best medical guidance and follow it, as hard as that might be." This country has been infected with coronavirus, more so than any other country in the world. The defense against this virus will take time to build. Dr. Gupta goes on to say "If the country were my patient right now, we would be having a conversation that would be important, tough, forward-planning and goal-oriented. The conversation we are now having is a challenging one, no doubt. But I am also quite confident that not only can we restore the patient to good health; we may even make the patient stronger than before. More prepared, and ready to deal with this infection in the future. Both doctor and patient have to be willing participants here. I have to keep up my end of the deal, and the patient has to keep up their end of the deal as well. The most effective treatments often take time and diligence. No short cuts





Current testing for COVID-19 is primarily nasopharyngeal swabs that detect current infection. Diagnostic or PCR testing of this type has been the most urgent focus and provides the most reliable results. This is the type of testing done at CWV. Many other tests are emerging, predominantly antibody tests. Antibody tests are blood samples that are used to determine if someone has already had the virus. The sensitivity and specificity of antibody tests are quite variable and often unreliable. The most sensitive and specific tests can still have a high rate of false positives. Even if the antibodies are truly present, there's just not enough data yet to say confidently whether that provides protection or how long it might last. This can offer false reassurance to individuals that they are protected from contracting the virus. More research is needed before we begin to utilize routine antibody testing.

Visualizing Respiratory Illness Contagion:



This graphic on the left provides a visual representation of how respiratory illness spreads, and how proper mask usage along with social distancing can reduce exposure risk. Clearly, staying inside your home is the safest option. Distancing yourself outdoors, especially with a mask on, is very low risk. When indoors, if both individuals are wearing masks and distancing themselves, the probability of catching the virus remains very low. The amount of virus in the air and the amount of time you are exposed to the virus matters a great deal. For example, being in a smaller space for a longer period of time with someone who has the virus (with or without symptoms) exponentially increases your risk. Other factors that increase risk are coughing and sneezing. Even talking loudly or singing can release more particles into the surrounding air. As we are allowed to move around our communities more freely and be in contact with more people in more places more regularly, the risks remain significant. If you are sitting in a well-ventilated space, with few people, the risk is low. More reason to spend time outdoors!

Reopening safely will take time and the "new normal" will look different. That doesn't mean life has to stay on lockdown. Until we know more, we must utilize the information we have to the best of our abilities. We will have tough months ahead but there are safe ways to enjoy summer. The flowers are in bloom and walking is a great exercise. Please remember to wear a mask when taking a walk, chances are you will encounter another walker and might want to stop to chat (six feet away of course). Travelling to your favorite vacation home? Risk level depends on what you do while you're there. Need to stop along the way on your travels? If you get in & out quickly, wear your mask and wash your hands so the risk is low.

I remain cautiously optimistic and grateful for all the help and support from everyone in these difficult times. As they say, "It takes a Village!"