

Radio Show (COVID-19 Q&A Special Edition)

In these confusing times, the ability to get clear answers is key. In Clyde River, SeeChange's and Ilisqsiqivik's staff (Medical Doctor and COVID-19 Coordinator) are airing on a weekly basis to answer questions from community-members. Q&As include:

Why is this coronavirus so serious?

- It spreads very easily from person to person. Even people with few or no symptoms can spread the virus to others.
- The virus replicates quickly, so it can make a person sick very quickly.
- There is not yet a specific treatment for it.
- There is not yet a vaccine to prevent sickness from it.
- The virus has spread throughout the world and is therefore considered a pandemic (= global outbreak of a disease).
- It looks like the virus is here to stay, i.e. it will not 'burn out' likely the SARS epidemic ~18 years ago.

What should I do if I think that I may have Covid-19?

- Call your local health centre if you have a new cough and fever. Let them know your symptoms and if you have traveled outside of your community lately.
- Don't suffer at home if you are feeling short of breath!
- It is important that you call ahead to the health centre and follow their instructions.

How is Covid-19 disease treated?

- There is no quick cure.
- In most cases, a person's immune system will fight off Covid-19 after 1-2 weeks.
- Tylenol can help with a fever and pains.
- If you become short of breath, you can get oxygen at the local health centre.

- The best treatment is PREVENTION!

How can transmission of the coronavirus between people be PREVENTED?

- Avoid being in close contact with others by staying home as much as possible.
- Only go out for essential reasons, e.g. to get groceries.
- When you go to the store, try to maintain 6 feet from others. This is part of 'social distancing'; although maybe better described as 'physical distancing'.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (you can sing a 20-30 song while handwashing)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing to reduce the spread of droplets and germs.
- Wear a home-made mask in public places to help reduce the spread of droplets and germs, since a mask traps them before they can float in the air and settle on surfaces. Masks are important to reduce spread of the virus from asymptomatic people.

Who is at risk of getting seriously sick from Covid-19?

- Although people with weakened immune systems are especially at risk, the truth is that ALL AGES can get very sick from this virus.
- People aged 65 and over
- People with compromised immune systems
- People with underlying medical conditions (e.g. high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung diseases, cancer)
- Note that people with tuberculosis are also at increased risk of serious Covid-19 disease.

How can I manage the stress and anxiety that I am feeling?

- Deep breathing; Talking to friends/relatives on the phone or online; Mindful activities; Limiting time on social media.

Is it possible to get the coronavirus again? Nobody knows for sure yet! This is a new virus and many things are not yet known about it, including the level of immunity (protection) that develops following a first infection. When a vaccine becomes available, this will help to prevent people from becoming infected in the future...

Can children get seriously sick from Covid-19? It is rare for a child to get serious Covid-19 disease. Instead, those at highest risk of serious disease include:

- the elderly
- those with underlying medical conditions (high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity)
- those with pre-existing lung conditions (COPD, tuberculosis, asthma, smokers)
- those with weakened immune systems (e.g. due to cancer or other treatments)
- note that males are at increased risk compared to females

Can you catch it from animals? Although this virus evolved in animals and then infected humans, transmission these days is from HUMAN to HUMAN.

Can a person have no symptoms and spread the virus? Yes! This is one of the reasons why it is so important to wear masks and why this new coronavirus is so dangerous. Those who are infected, but lucky enough to have no or few symptoms, do not realize that they are infected, but can still transmit the virus to others.

Elder not walking as much outside. Feeling tired because of it. What else can she do? It is perfectly okay to go for a walk outside, as long as you practice social/physical distancing, i.e. stay at least 6 feet away from others. Wearing a homemade mask provides additional protection.

If a person has sleeping TB, are they at increased risk? A small study from China found that those with tuberculosis were at increased risk of more serious Covid-19 disease. This included both active and sleeping TB. It is important to note that more data is needed about this important issue.

If I've had TB, am I at higher risk? Yes, people with TB are at increased risk of having more serious Covid-19 disease. It is important that people with TB who develop a fever or new cough get assessed in their local health centre ASAP. It is also

important that people on TB medication continue to have access to it during this pandemic, so that they don't miss any doses.

Does Nunavut have enough medical supplies to deal with Covid-19? Since the virus does not yet seem to have found its way into Nunavut, there has been more time to acquire necessary medical supplies compared to elsewhere around the world. One issue that will need ongoing attention is how best to ensure that Nunavummiut have rapid access to a ventilator (for those few unlucky enough to need one), since ventilators are located 1-2 flights away --- in Iqaluit and larger Canadian cities (Ottawa, Winnipeg, etc.) where they have the necessary medical expertise.

If I get Covid-19, will I stay in the health centre or be sent home? Most people who are infected with the virus will have less severe disease that can be managed in their home. A minority (probably ~20%) will require oxygen in their local health centre. Fewer still will have to be flown down to Iqaluit or elsewhere for more specialized medical care (e.g. ventilator).

Can it be transmitted through food? There is NO evidence that this new coronavirus can be transmitted through food. However, it is important that people wash their hands properly each time before eating to avoid exposing themselves to other germs.