

UPDATE: COVID-19 Information for Saratoga County March 24, 2020

Ballston Spa, NY - The Saratoga County Department of Public Health continues to work diligently to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 in the county.

There are 64 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Saratoga County at this time. In some instances, the confirmed cases are family members living within the same residence. The slower rate of increase in confirmed cases is related to the reduced accessibility of tests in the region. The virus continues to spread throughout the community and it's important that everyone take precautions to protect themselves.

The availability of testing at local hospitals remains limited and criteria for testing has become more stringent. Residents who are experiencing symptoms should call their doctor, and if the criteria is met testing will be ordered. **Because testing may be delayed it's important that everyone work together to 'flatten the curve' by minimizing in-person interaction with others, practicing social distancing, practicing good hand hygiene and staying home as much as possible.**

If you are a person who is over the age of 65, or someone of any age who has a chronic disease or disorder, you are considered to be at high risk and more vulnerable to contracting the virus. **All vulnerable people need to follow the rules for personal conduct;** remain indoors unless you go outside to do solitary exercise; pre-screen all visitors by taking temperatures; don't visit households with multiple people; wear a mask in the presence of others; stay six feet away from others; and do not take public transportation, unless absolutely necessary.

Dr. Michael Prezioso, Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services for Saratoga County is urging residents to prepare for changes to our daily routines as the community deals with COVID-19 spread. **He suggests a great way to cope is to ACT:**

- Acknowledge that you can't control everything, but focus on what you can!
- Create and commit to new routines!
- Take care of yourself and those around you by practicing healthy habits and following guidelines!

Businesses with surplus personal protective gear used by medical staff such as N95 masks, gloves and gowns are asked to contact the Saratoga County office of Emergency Services if they would be able to make a donation to the county's emergency management team.

In recent days there have been more than **1,000 new phone numbers** enrolled in our Emergency Mass Notification System, CodeRED. Residents can enroll in the county's CodeRED emergency notification system to receive updates from the county's Emergency Management Team. To enroll, follow this link: <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BF26DE55718D>

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE AND ADVISORIES

Residents should adhere to guidance issued by the State of New York and the public health advisories issued by the Saratoga County Department of Public Health.

Residents who have been advised to self-isolate need to **frequently disinfect and sanitize commonly used surfaces**; tables, doorknobs, light switches, counter-tops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

Saratoga County Department of Public Health Director Cathi Duncan reminds parents that **children home from school should also refrain from congregating in groups** and should follow the social distancing recommendations.

Residents are also reminded that in order to be tested for COVID-19 an order is required from a medical doctor or healthcare provider. **Guidelines related to testing criteria are changing as we learn more about the virus**, please consult with your doctor to learn if you meet the criteria required for COVID-19 testing; if you do not have a healthcare provider you may call the Department of Public Health. If an individual believes they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 they should **contact their primary care physician** ahead of time to make an appointment.

Residents who have been advised by their doctor to self-isolate and who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 should follow the directions of their doctor which may include: staying home and self-isolating; using a separate bathroom from household members; staying at least six feet away from other household members; resting; staying hydrated and refraining from having any visitors into the home.

If an individual has questions regarding COVID-19, they can contact the state Department of Health hotline at 1-888-364-3065.

MENTAL HEALTH GUIDANCE

Saratoga County Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services Director Dr. Michael Prezioso urges adults to remember that children have questions too. **Parents and guardians should offer reassurance and answer questions in terms that young people will understand.** Children will be looking to the adults in their lives to see how worried they should be, show them how to face challenges with courage, kindness and determination.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Saratoga County Emergency Management Team is seeking **trained medical professionals to volunteer** at the emergency operations center's hotline. Volunteers will answer calls from residents with questions regarding COVID-19. Trained medical personnel include practicing or retired nurses, doctors, EMS or paramedic personnel.

The Emergency Management Team is also **accepting donations of N95 masks and other medical supplies** such as gloves, protective face masks, and medical gowns. Any individual or business with access to these resources is asked to call the Saratoga County Office of Emergency Services.

SYMPTOMS AND AVOIDANCE

Symptoms of COVID-19 include: cough, fever, trouble breathing and pneumonia.

While there is currently no vaccine to prevent the virus, these simple steps can help stop the spread of this and other respiratory viruses:

- Practice physical distancing and avoid handshakes.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

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