

BIHS COVID-19 Update
Friday, April 3, 2020

Dear Block Island Community,
We regret to inform you that the first documented positive case of COVID-19 has been identified on Block Island.

The patient is an island resident in his 70's who alerted the Medical Center to symptoms of shortness of breath and cough on April 1st. The patient was evaluated at the Medical Center and testing was performed. The patient was subsequently admitted to the ICU at a major mainland medical center and is currently in serious but stable condition. The Medical Center is actively tracing and testing contacts. Further details are not being released in order to protect the patient's privacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread and threaten the health of our community. Our best defense is to continue to follow the guidance from the CDC, the RI Department of Health and reinforced by our local Town Emergency Declaration.

We urge all Block Islanders to rigorously adhere to the directives outlined below and in the Town of New Shoreham Emergency Ordinance. The Town of New Shoreham updated the [Emergency Ordinance](#) to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community from COVID-19. A shelter in place order went into effect on March 23rd, at 5PM.

DO YOUR PART TO KEEP BLOCK ISLAND SAFE

- Follow the Shelter in Place directives
- **Wear a mask of scarf when in public.** At this time, ahead of anticipated CDC changes to mask-wearing guidelines, we are asking everyone on Block Island to cover nose and mouth with a mask or personal scarf while in public.
- **Self-quarantine for 14 days when returning from ANY trip off island.**
- Reach out to the Medical Center by telephone if you feel ill or if you have a known COVID-19 exposure.

Please read the entire ordinance on the Town website: <http://www.new-shoreham.com/>

The term "[Shelter in Place](#)" means remaining at your residence except for Essential Activitiesⁱⁱ; however, people may leave their homes for outside activities such as walks and exercise, but social distancing must be maintained and the [CDC "15 Days to Slow the Spread"](#) and [Rhode Island Department of Health guidelines](#) must be followed.

We are aware that the 'Shelter in Place' ordinance may increase distress experienced by individuals caused by social isolation from friends and family members. **For this reason, we ask every Block Islander reach out by telephone every day to at least two individuals by telephone "just to check in."** We especially encourage everyone to think of our elderly or those who may live alone and reach out to them, ensure they are OK and that they have what they need. You do not need to be on Block Island right now in order to reach out to a friend, relative or colleague, or someone who may be isolated or alone. Please have a low threshold to encourage individuals who seem to be struggling to call the medical center for assistance. In addition, technology allows us to "virtually visit" with friends and relatives through online applications like "ZOOM" <https://zoom.us/> video conferencing or Apple FaceTime. Both are surprisingly easy to use and a FaceTime visit with a grandchild can work wonders to lift someone's spirits. Some families and friends are finding this a positive way to connect during these times.

It is important that any individual who has sought treatment on the mainland and who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 contact the Medical Center to keep us apprised for the safety of the Block Island community.

COVID-19 TESTING on Block Island

- We have a limited number of tests on island and are performing testing on a case by case basis.
- We do not enough tests for routine screening yet. We have reached out to our lab reps, the RIDOH and our congressman to ask for expedited test kits for Block Island.
- Anyone with specific questions or concerns about testing should contact Dr. Clark. at the Medical Center (401) 466-2974 ext. 3

The Medical Center recognizes the need for continued primary and urgent care of our patients and that unique health concerns arise in a time of uncertainty or crisis. We are here and continue to respond to our community's needs.

A summary of BIHS current operations is as follows:

The Medical Center is scheduling telephone visits with Dr. Clark. Please call (401) 466-2974 ext. 3 Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 3 PM to schedule an appointment.

- The Medical Center will continue to respond to all acute care and urgent issues.
- We are conducting doctor's visits by telephone or video-call whenever possible. Calls can be scheduled by calling (401) 466-2974 ext. 3, Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 3 PM.
- BIHS behavioral health services will continue by telephone or video conferencing. Please call the Medical Center if you need assistance contacting a provider.
- PT services will continue for essential visits only and with special precautions, telehealth visits began this week, please call Alison Warfel to make an appointment. (401) 466-2974 ext. 6
- All BIHS Wellness and Risk Reduction Program visits are suspended.
- BIHS Women's Health visits are postponed until late April.
- Please call the Medical Center for any questions or if you would like to schedule a phone or video visit for medical or behavioral health.

During this anxiety provoking time, if you or a loved one is having difficulty coping, please reach out to the medical center for assistance. We are here to help, and our behavioral health team is poised to provide more telehealth services as needed.

If you have questions or need information about a behavioral health or substance use, if you are feeling overwhelmed or experiencing a behavioral health or substance use emergency, BH LINK (401) 414-5465 crisis assessment is available 24/7.

<https://www.bhlink.org/>

If you become ill with fever or flu-like symptoms, reach out to the Medical Center by phone; do not come to the Medical Center without calling ahead so that we can ensure the safety of all Block Islanders. Together we will work out next steps and ensure you receive the care you need.

As of April 2nd, Rhode Island has 657 confirmed cases of COVID-19 resulting in 12. .

- **Protect yourself and your community**
 - Wear a personal scarf or mask to cover nose and mouth when in public.
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick and stay at home if you are sick.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
 - **Call first.** If you are concerned that you may be sick with COVID-19, call first before going to the Medical Center or other health care facility if off island.
- **RIDOH COVID-19**
 - 401-222-8022. RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov.
- **Businesses**
 - [Information for Rhode Island Employees and Employers](#) (RIDLT)
- **Schools, colleges, and universities**
 - [Guidance for School Settings](#) (CDC)
- **Families and households**
 - [Interim Guidance: Get Your Household Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (CDC)
- **Communities and Faith-based organizations**

- [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#) (CDC)
- [People at risk for serious illness from COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- **Helpful websites**
 - [Rhode Island Department of Health, COVID-19 page](#)
 - [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 page](#)
- **Informative Video on protecting yourself and your family by Weill Cornell Critical Care Physician:** <https://vimeo.com/399733860?ref=em-share>

^[i] The term "Essential Activities" includes activities relating to the following: public safety; public works; medical care; public utilities such as water, sewer and electric; sale and purchase of gasoline, sale and purchase of propane and heating oil; delivery of medicines; transfer station; sale and purchase of liquor as provided in this emergency ordinance; sale and purchase of hardware and lumber; post office; package delivery; sale and purchase of groceries; sale and purchase of take-out food; banking; education as it directly relates to development of curriculum and its distribution; and emergency vehicle repairs.