

BIHS COVID-19 Update
Thursday, March 19, 2020

Dear Block Island Community,

At this time there has not been and there is no suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 on Block Island. However, it is important to remain vigilant in practicing social distancing to minimize the risk of spreading the virus through community infection.

As of today, Rhode Island had 33 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 2,500 patients under self-quarantine and 334 pending tests awaiting results. There are currently 7,038 confirmed US cases distributed through all states.

The Town of New Shoreham passed an Emergency Ordinance on March 18th to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community from COVID-19. The Emergency Declaration is in effect through April 15th and enforces the guidance from Governor Raimondo with additional precautionary measures for Block Island, given our limited medical resources.

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

It is imperative that we adhere to common-sense guidelines previously distributed and posted again below to prevent virus transmission. Emergence of COVID-19 on Block Island would quickly over-run our limited island medical resources. As tourism to Block Island increases with the season, the risk of exposure of the island community to COVID-19 increases.

It is safest for families and individuals to behave as if the virus is already here; to avoid non-essential outings and to practice social distancing. We know that COVID-19 is easily transmissible, even in the absence of symptoms, through the air and by direct contact. For this reason, at this time, social distancing applies to everyone, not just those who are ill. Individuals who are ill, even with seemingly mild respiratory symptoms are urged to STAY HOME until their symptoms have completely resolved. All returning domestic and international travelers to Block Island are urged to heightened awareness and to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return to the island.

This week the Medical Center is deferring all non-essential and routine visits including physical therapy and ancillary services to a later date. A summary of BIHS current operations is as follows:

- 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.
- BIHS behavioral health services will continue by telephone or video conferencing.
- PT services will continue for essential visits only and with special precautions, telemedicine visits will begin next week.
- 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.

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.

The Medical Center continues to receive and follow guidance and directives from the CDC and the RIDOH. We will continue to share these status and guideline updates with our community. **Below is a synopsis of the current status of the crisis in Rhode Island and updated guidelines according the RIDOH.**

- As of March 13, 2020, Rhode Island has 20 documented cases of COVID-19.
- RIDOH has posted [current data online](#).
- In addition to the positive cases, 198 people had negative test results at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories, and approximately 600 people have been instructed to self-quarantine because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19.

- **Travel:**
 - All Rhode Islanders returning from travel are urged to self-quarantine for 14 days. That means not going to work, not going to school, and staying home. For Block Islanders we are extending this guideline to domestic travel as well.
- **Community gatherings:**
 - Governor Gina Raimondo and the Director of Health Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott recommend against gatherings of 10 or more.
- **What does “mitigation” mean?**
 - **Since there is currently no available vaccine or specific medicine to treat COVID-19, “mitigation”—or lessening the impact or harm” is the chief strategy at this time.**
 - Community mitigation strategies include staying at home, especially when you are sick, limiting visitors to your household, implementing social distancing.
- **At this time, testing is still only available at selected sites on the mainland and must be approved on a case by case basis by the RIDOH.**
- **Protect yourself and your community**
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick and stay at home if you are sick.
 - Avoid crowds and gatherings, stay home.
 - 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](#)