Dear Block Island Community,

The Town of New Shoreham updated the Emergency Ordinance on March 23rd to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community from COVID-19. A shelter in place order went into effect yesterday at 5PM. The Emergency Declaration is in effect through April 15th and enforces the guidance from Governor Raimondo and the CDC, with additional precautionary measures for Block Island. The Medical Center is grateful for the swift and decisive action by the Town Council and supports the measures outlined as prudent and protective of the entire Block Island community, and especially of our cherished elderly population.

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 Activities; 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 are requesting that starting today and in the coming weeks 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.

As the number of positive cases escalate around the region, it is imperative that we adhere to the guidelines put forth in the emergency ordinance.

Emergence of COVID-19 on Block Island would quickly over-run our limited island medical resources.

At this time there has not been and there is no suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 on Block Island. However, it is safest for families and individuals to behave as if the virus is already here. In keeping with the shelter in place ordinance, eliminate non-essential outings and practice social distancing. We know that
COVID-19 is easily transmissible, even in the absence of symptoms, through droplets in the air and by direct contact with others or contaminated surfaces. 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 should avoid contact with others including family members whenever possible until their symptoms have completely resolved. All travelers to Block Island are required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return to the island.

COVID-19 TESTING ON Block Island

- There is a nationwide shortage of COVID-19 tests and BI is no exception. Because of the shortage, the CDC and RIDOH directs that testing for COVID-19 be performed preferentially for patients who are very ill or who are considered high risk by a health care provider. In high risk or very ill patients testing will change the course of treatment. However, in mild or moderate cases testing will not change the course of treatment.
- Ideally by this time COVID-19 tests kits for widespread testing would have been made available by the federal government or by commercial labs. Although this was promised, it has not yet happened.
- As of this week, the Medical Center secured very few test kits to be selectively used for high risk individuals. We do not enough tests to consider routine screening yet.
- We continue to follow CDC and RIDOH guidelines and to monitor the availability of testing and will keep the BI community informed.
- Anyone with specific questions or concerns 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 March 24, Rhode Island has 124 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 3,000 patients under self-quarantine. There are currently 44,183 confirmed US cases distributed through all states.
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.**

- RIDOH has posted [current data online](https://health.ri.gov/coronavirus/).

- **Protect yourself and your community**
  - 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

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1 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.