

A Message from Dr. Clark...

At this time there has not been and there is no suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 on Block Island. This may change, especially as islanders return from travel and if Block Island sees an influx of visitors over the coming days and weeks. There have been 2 cases of self-quarantine on island as recommended by the DOH—one based on domestic travel with low grade symptoms—now resolving; and the other based on international travel to a high-risk area with no symptoms.

As the situation evolves on the mainland, Block Island has a golden window of opportunity to protect our community: 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 unnecessary 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.

Until further notice, the Medical Center will defer all non-essential and routine visits including physical therapy and ancillary services to a later date. The Medical Center will continue to respond to all acute care and urgent issues.

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 to 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.
- **School closures:**
 - School vacation week in Rhode Island was moved from April to the week of March 16. During this time, teachers and other school staff are urged to remain local. The change in school vacation week is to limit spread of COVID-19 while allowing schools and districts to work with the Rhode Island Department of Education on their distance learning plans. Schools should also use next week to clean and disinfect all surfaces in their buildings.
- **Travel:**
 - All Rhode Islanders who have traveled anywhere internationally in the last 14 days are urged to self-quarantine. That means not going to work, not going to school, and staying home.
- **Community gatherings:**

- Governor Gina Raimondo and the Director of Health Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott recommend against large community gatherings and gatherings of older adults. (Older adults are greater risk of serious disease if they contract the illness)
 - **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](#)