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COVID-19: We Need Each Other
By Dr. Michele Dikkers, Chair of Clayton County Board of Health

Human beings are social creatures. We are born an infant and become a person through our interactions with others. We crave and need to interact with others. It is our way of learning how to integrate into society, to learn how to communicate, how to fit in and survive.

Humans have an internal need to be part of a group, to learn from each other, help each other, comfort each other, care for each other.

When one is interviewed for medical school, nursing school, etc., one of the questions often asked is “Why do you want to go into medicine?”

Frequently the answer is “to help people”. Students are advised that a more in depth or different answer may be more effective in making an impression on the interviewer. But when it comes down to it, that’s why most of us do our jobs. Mechanics, chefs, housekeepers, teachers, construction workers, nurses, clergy...we all help people. We all want to help people. It is ingrained in us; it is part of who we are.

Being with people and socializing is a need. A deep desire. The human touch, the presence of others, of those we love can be therapeutic. We need people to survive.

So, yes, it is difficult to practice social distancing, to self-isolate or quarantine, to avoid group activities. We miss visiting our families and friends, especially when they are in the hospital, living centers and care facilities. They miss us. We miss them.

COVID-19 is not picky, anyone can come down with it, some can even have it, not have symptoms and pass it on to others. We do know that some can be at higher risk for complications and death. Those at highest risk are those with medical issues and the elderly, those in the hospital and care facilities.

Restrictions on visitors to the hospital and care facilities were not instituted lightly. We take the responsibility and privilege of caring for our and your loved ones very seriously. Like parents, we want to care for and protect them. By limiting or restricting visitors, we are attempting to keep illness outside of the building, away from the patients and away from those that are caring for them, so they can remain healthy to do their job. We are also trying to keep illnesses from leaving the building. The challenge with COVID-19 is that it can come and go without notice. We know that one starts to be contagious 2 days prior to symptoms starting, and may not have symptoms at all, but still be contagious.

Restrictions on visitors is guided by the prevalence of illness in our community. Restrictions can be lifted when the infection rate decreases and the positivity rate drops. A goal for low transmission is a positivity rate of less than 5%. The positivity rate in Iowa has typically remained between 7% and 9%.
Decreasing the infection rate, the positivity rate, can be done by washing hands, social distancing and wearing masks when in public. Wearing is caring.

We are social creatures. We all want to beat COVID-19. And in order to do that we need each other. We need each of us to wear a mask and physically distance.

Let’s all do what’s right and take care of each other.

We are in this together.