



2020

Advice regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19)

Dear knights, dames & friends of the Order of Malta,

As we try to adjust to the new reality of self-isolation and ceaseless sanitization, I have consulted with our medical professionals and especially our Hospitaller, Dr. Bill Sullivan, regarding Canadian Association activities. Our main concern is for the health of members, volunteers and for the vulnerable populations we serve. Dr. Sullivan has prepared information pertaining to the COVID-19 virus and recommended practices that need to become part of our daily rituals.

However, we must also not forget about the marginalized in our society and I encourage our healthy knights, dames & volunteers to find creative solutions to provide for the poor and the elderly. Of course we need to be mindful of local civil instructions. On a teleconference two nights ago, our confrere Christian Elia presented a way to continue Hunger Patrol without close personal contact. This included working with our homeless shelter partners to distribute individually wrapped food, socks and underwear on our behalf. This gesture will let those in need and most vulnerable to know that the Order continues to work to bring God's love and care to them and others.

Please reach out by phone to the elderly neighbors, knights or dames to ensure they are not forgotten, are healthy, and have the food and supplies they need. Self-isolation and caring for our own health, doesn't mean we can't continue to live the Order's charism.

In Domino

Roman J. Cieciewicz, KMOB
President



HELP THOSE WHO ARE LESS ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES:

- When working with marginalized people society, we risk exposure to viral and other infections, and vice versa. They are also at risk of being abandoned during a pandemic. Healthy volunteers and members of the Order should feel confident continuing their programs with reasonable precautions
- When caring for self or others, remember to take care of yourself. Eat, sleep and undertake activities to keep you mentally healthy such as exercise

Pray.

ON COVID-19:

This is a new virus; as learn about it, the information below could change.

How the virus is spread

- Through droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can be breathed into noses or mouths of people up to 2 meters away.
- When the droplets land on surfaces they can be picked up by people touching that surface. The transfer occurs when people touch their noses, mouths, eyes or other areas of the face.
- The virus can last on surfaces, especially steel or plastic ones, for 1-3 days.
- Although one study found that the virus can survive in air for an hour or longer, their levels in air are not high enough to pose a risk to most people who are not near an infected person who has coughed or sneezed.
- The time from exposure to developing symptoms of an upper respiratory tract infection is 2-14 days. Watch for cough, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or any combination. Other symptoms could include muscle aches, diarrhea, reduced sense of smell or redness of eye.
- In other words, you can carry the virus without knowing it for up to two weeks.

Vulnerable populations and recovery

- Most people who have the virus experience mild symptoms and recover in 1-2 weeks.
- People who have been infected and who recover will typically develop immunity.
- People over 70 years and/or those who have lung disease, compromised immunity, heart disease or diabetes are at higher risk than others of developing pneumonia and other
- potentially fatal respiratory problems

Cures

- There is not yet a vaccine or proven curative medication for COVID-19. It is a good idea, to get vaccinated for Influenza (Flu) and Pneumonia (Pneumococcal Pneumonia) vaccinations to lower the risk of these possible infections if one becomes infected by COVID-19.
- The best we can aim for is a situation where, increasingly, people in a community avoid or delay becoming infected or develop immunity to the virus following an infection.



The Health Care System

- A major concern is that too many people could become infected at the same time which could exceed the capacity of our system to support seriously ill persons who might require intensive care beds and ventilators.

Precautions:

- Use tissues or your elbow to cover your nose when blowing your nose or sneezing, and your mouth when coughing.
- Throw tissues, napkins or paper towels after use into a lined garbage container.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 15-20 seconds (Pray “Our Father) after being in public places and after blowing your nose, sneezing, coughing or handling garbage containing used tissues. (<https://youtu.be/O6Y5cK6D8wo>)
- If unable to wash hands, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. To make your own, see: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Hand-Sanitizer>
- Use anti-viral wipes (e.g., containing 1% chlorine) to clean high-touch surfaces (e.g., elevator or traffic light buttons, shared phones or computer keyboards, desk or
- countertops, faucets, door handles, handrails) and limit touching those surfaces with your unprotected hands or use disposable gloves and wash or clean hands after such contacts.
- **Masks:** Wearing surgical masks is not currently recommended for the general public. The best thing masks do for members of the general population is remind them not to touch their mouths or noses with unwashed hands. For those who have respiratory symptoms (coughing, runny nose), a surgical mask can reduce risk of spreading droplets to others.
- Adopt social distancing: Stay 2 meters away from people.
This does not mean social isolation. Friendly greetings and other gestures of solidarity are encouraged.
- Avoid greeting people physically - kissing, hugging or shaking hands
- Self-isolate for 14 days if:
 - You recently returned from travel outside Canada.
 - You develop symptoms associated with COVID-19.
 - You have been exposed to the virus from contact with someone who tested positive to the virus or was experiencing respiratory symptoms of COVID-19.
- Follow local protocols for testing for COVID-19 (See provincial public health websites.)
- You will normally need a referral from a healthcare provider.
- For self assessment: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- Maintain isolation for 14 days even if you test negative.
- If your respiratory symptoms are becoming more severe (increased shortness of breath), contact your health care provider or emergency services.



Personal Protective Equipment

- In situations involving close contact with people in environments where maintaining appropriate hygiene or distancing practices are not possible, you could also consider modifying the ways you can offer to serve (e.g., supporting front-line workers) or wearing some personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a surgical mask, disposable gloves, eye protection, and an outer disposable gown or layer of clothing that can be removed and washed following the exposure.
- PPE are usually reserved for healthcare professionals and paramedics and used in the context of assessing or caring for people in an isolated room suspected of having or who were diagnosed with COVID-19. For PPE to be effective, one also needs to use proper techniques when putting it on and removing it.
- According to experts at St. Michael's Hospital Inner City Health, Toronto, currently PPE is not recommended for healthcare providers or others who are working with asymptomatic people experiencing homelessness. If one encounters someone who is symptomatic, one should direct that person to a COVID-19 assessment centre. These directives could change. If using PPE becomes a condition for members and volunteers to continue their specific charitable projects, then prior to resuming these projects they would need to obtain such equipment (supplies might be limited) and be trained in its proper use.

This advice is not meant to provide definitive rules for every situation that members and volunteers might encounter. Prudent and morally good judgment in each situation is still required. Such judgments ought to be informed by reliable facts and current local public-health protocols. Our main goal in the context of COVID-19 should still be to “do good” by finding new ways to help Our Lords, the sick, and others who are less able to help themselves. We also need to do so in a way that avoids doing harm, such as by exposing those who are at high risk of serious illness to this infection. This will require moral courage to bear the burdens and personal risks associated with such service. By understanding the nature of this infection and taking reasonable precautions as outlined above, together all members and volunteers of the Canadian Association can be an important force for good during a time of uncertainty and fear.

HELPFUL LINKS

- Government of Canada COVID-19 information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/publichealth/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>
- Ontario Ministry of Health self-assessment for symptoms: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- This website contains useful information for those in isolation or caring for someone who is in isolation: <https://www.gps-can.com.au/covid19-blog/a-guide>
- U.S.A. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>