



MEDIA RELEASE
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St. Clair County Health Department-Opinion Editorial
Do the Right Thing

The St. Clair County Health Department follows up on all positive cases/lab results that come into the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS). One thing is pretty clear, transmission of this virus can often be tracked from one positive case to another. Several factors are making this scenario worse. Test results are sometimes delayed, and while those that are tested due to a known or suspected exposure are waiting they do not isolate (stay away from others when they are sick) or quarantine (separate themselves from others after exposure). Additionally people continue to work and socialize while feeling ill.

As stated, testing remains to be the “thorn in our side” as many labs continue to have delayed results. Much of this gets worse as cases, and thus testing, grows throughout the state and country. We have no control over this and are actively searching for alternative options, though it is not clear if there are any or when we will find them. In the meantime, we encourage individuals who are feeling well to monitor for symptoms and continue quarantining if they have been around others with the virus. Testing is most useful for those who develop symptoms and need to know if it is COVID or something else.

Those that deem a test necessary should remember that when waiting for your results, you should assume you are positive. Avoid crowds, vulnerable people, visiting public places, and going to work. We are finding many people who took a test in good faith, failed to isolate themselves, only to learn a week later they have been spreading the virus. We call this “unintentional propagation” but it’s unfortunate nonetheless! Remember if you have been advised to quarantine, getting a negative test DOES NOT eliminate the need for further quarantine! The virus can take up to 14 days to start replicating in your body (detectable in a test) and a negative test on day five DOES NOT tell you what will happen on day 14!

Another common issue is that people will work a few days while feeling ill, then realize they should get tested. This is a problem. The virus spreads really well, 24-48 hours before you even feel sick, especially in the first few days of illness. Unlike influenza that “hits you like a freight train”, SARS-CoV-2 often creeps in with mild (allergy-like) symptoms, only to possibly get worse days or even weeks later. The take home message here is, “STAY HOME IF YOU FEEL EVEN MILDLY ILL”. Even if a tickle in your throat and some body aches are the most you experience, remember some people get really sick (for a long time) and could even die from the virus you give them. This huge difference in outcomes from COVID-19 is impossible to predict and can even occur in a young healthy individual. Do not be the “unintentional spreader” of COVID-19. Do the right thing for your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers: wear a mask, keep your distance, wash your hands, and stay home when you are sick and when waiting for your test results!

Yours in Health,

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