

Coronavirus Precautions More Important Now than Ever



As the government encourages business openings, we must not end the preventative measures we each take to limit the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, behavior in communities since May 1 suggests that many think we are past the threat – fewer people are wearing masks, people are going out in groups, children are playing in parks, sharing toys, etc.

In my professional opinion as a health and wellness professor, the reason COVID-19 has not spread in Utah the way it has in places such as New York or Europe is because we have sheltered in our homes. We were able to intervene and close down early before the virus spread like it did in other places. Our distance from urban centers has simply delayed the hit to our community, not made us immune from its spread. Despite extreme measures of staying home across Utah, we have continued to average just below 200 new cases per day across the state. Had we not closed most places down, it likely would have been significantly worse, and it is far from over.

The fact that we are opening businesses, parks and other locations does not mean we have suddenly reached a point where

the virus is no longer a risk or is no longer contagious. Based on scientific data, simply opening everything back up and returning to normal life will likely result in the spread of the virus like we have yet to see in Utah. We cannot assume everything is normal until we have a vaccine and/or guaranteed treatment for the masses, and estimates are 2021. Until that time, the virus will likely continue to spread.

To make a slow opening across the state feasible, we must be diligent in our efforts when we are out. We should wear masks, which prevents unintended particulates from your mouth and nose from landing on surfaces others will touch, thus spreading the virus if you are a carrier. We should not shake hands, hug or physically touch others (except those you live with). We should maintain 6 feet of distance from everyone around us, which prevents airborne spread. We should frequently wash our hands or sanitize when touching things others may have touched, such as doorknobs, shopping carts and credit card machines, and if we touch our own faces, as we might be a carrier of the virus and not know it.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, shaking, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell), stay home. If you are in a high-risk group or around someone who has asthma, lung disease, diabetes, heart conditions, kidney disease, obesity, high blood pressure, liver disease, are immunocompromised, living in a care facility or 65+ in age, be extremely cautious.

If we are reckless now, we may be forced into another shutdown. We cannot maintain a permanent shutdown and survive economically, nor can we return to business as usual without causing significant increases in COVID-19 cases and deaths.

So, let's all be diligent to prevent the spread as we go out so we can avoid a COVID-19 surge and another government-required shutdown. The lives and economic needs of our

community depend upon each of us practicing responsible preventative measures.

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