**Board of Legislators**
County Office Building, Room 201
7 Court Street
Belmont, New York 14813
Phone: 585-268-9222

# Press Release

March 30, 2020

## ALLEGANY COUNTY SUFFERS FIRST DEATH FROM COVID–19

The Allegany County Department of Health was recently notified of the death of our first County resident. "To protect the family's privacy, the only information we are releasing is that the person was over 60 years old and had other health conditions that could have compromised their recovery from COVID–19," said Lori Ballengee, Public Health Director. "I can't stress strongly enough that this is a community acquired disease. While we are protecting the public by isolating or quarantining exposed people immediately after we are notified, there are still things you can do. We understand people are feeling afraid and powerless right now. But you do have the power and control to protect you and your family as much as you can by following the guidance below," she said.

Community acquired means you can get it from respiratory droplets from infected people and on any surface as long as the virus is alive. So if you touch a door handle, counter, etc. that has live virus on it, then touch a mucous membrane (nose, eye, mouth) you can introduce the virus into your body. Identifying a store or business where people may have been doesn't help because the virus is everywhere and can give a false sense of security that the virus isn't everywhere else.

You need to be cautious everywhere by: Staying at home as much as you possibly can. You should only be leaving your home for:

**Essential Trips**:

Work if you are identified as an essential worker. If you work with the public and have any underlying medical conditions, have a frank discussion with your employer to work from home or at least not have contact with the public. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from everyone at work if you can. Go to work then directly home as much as possible.

Infrequent trips to the grocery/pharmacy, etc. Get in and get out. Send only one person from the family to the store at all times. Take a list with you to decrease your exposure time and don't stop to chat. Stay at least 6 feet away from people in the store if you can. Try to stock up for about a week. The trucks are still bringing supplies. There is no need to hoard.

To receive medical care as needed - call your physician to determine when you need to be seen. When your physician is closed, call 911 if you need medical care that cannot wait until your physician is open. You can go outside around your home only, to get some fresh air and exercise as long as you don't come closer than 6 to 8 feet from other people. Children should not play with others that do not reside in the same household. Playgrounds and parks are not ideal because there are a lot of high touch surfaces and it's hard for little ones to stay away from each other and not touch their face.

**Practice Good Hygiene**:

Wash hands frequently with soap and water, especially after returning home from work/being in the public, after sneezing/coughing, using the bathroom, before preparing meals, and before eating. This is the most effective way to rid your hands of the virus. There are some great videos out to instruct and encourage

kids to wash their hands and make it fun. Good and frequent hand washing is a year-round protection. If you are not near soap and water, hand sanitizer is your next best protection. Remember with all of this frequent handwashing, your hands may become chapped and create unseen cracks in your skin. Use a non-greasy lotion after washing to prevent chapping.

Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue or sneeze into your elbow, not your hand as this will help control the spread of the droplets. Immediately throw the tissue away and wash your hands.

**Monitor for Symptoms**:

If you are ill with anything, stay home, even if you are an essential worker. The CDC recommends staying home until you are fever/symptom free, with no medication for at least 72 hours. You are looking for an unusual cough, fever of 100.4 or higher, and a new tightness/pain in your chest, and/or shortness of breath. A good rule of thumb for that is if you can't speak a full sentence without running out of breath. Some people have also reported a headache, severe body aches, runny nose, and in some cases diarrhea. If you or your family start having symptoms, call your physician or 911 and let them know you are having symptoms. Please don't show up at their office or at the ER or Urgent Care. They need to know you have symptoms and will decide if you need to be tested for COVID–19 or seasonal flu, etc. and give you instructions.

The County has developed a COVID–19 Call Center (585) 268-9700, for general questions. If you have questions about whether you should be tested, or any symptoms, please call your physician. They know you best and can accurately determine your health care needs, including testing for COVID-19.

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