Ohio | Department of Health

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Amy Acton, M.D., MPH, Director

URGENT HEALTH ADVISORY

OHIOANS PROTECTING OHIOANS

WHEREAS, since the original Stay at Home and Stay Safe Ohio Department of Health orders, the circumstances in Ohio have evolved. The Department of Health orders have adapted to these rapidly changing circumstances, and current orders must reflect the status of where we are today; and

WHEREAS, Ohioans, through social distancing, have risen to the challenge, have avoided overwhelming our hospitals, and have flattened the curve; and

WHEREAS, because of this social distancing, Ohio's R-Naught Number (which represents how many people an average person with a virus infects) is now 1 to 1. Early in the fight against this pandemic, this number was 1 to 2; and

WHEREAS, many of our fellow Ohioans representing various sectors have created best practices for businesses as they reopen. These best practices are now orders that specify the mandatory and recommended framework for business operations that protect employees and customers; and

WHEREAS, the Stay at Home Order always had exceptions, including such things as going to the grocery store or pharmacy; checking on elderly relatives; attending funerals, weddings, and church services; and participating in outdoor activities, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, each business sector that Ohio has reopened has created further exceptions to the original order, which have, in turn, created further opportunities to leave home; and

WHEREAS, on April 30, 2020, Ohio changed the name of the Stay at Home Order to the Stay Safe Ohio Order to signal that as Ohio's economy reopens, Ohioans must make individual decisions to stay safe; and

WHEREAS, in this new phase in our battle against the virus, and it is incumbent upon Ohioans to protect Ohioans; and

WHEREAS, accompanying our freedom to guide our own actions is an equal responsibility to each other to slow the spread of this deadly virus, prevent a new spike of cases upon the reopening of the economy, and save the lives of our neighbors and loved ones; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus is still with us, it is still dangerous and deadly, and at no other time in our lives will our individual actions play a greater role in saving the lives of others, even complete strangers; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus is becoming one of the leading causes of death in Ohio -- outstripping motor vehicle deaths in 2018 and soon 2018 deaths by suicide; and

WHEREAS, preliminary research indicates that as of May 19, 2020, more than 90,000 people in the U.S., including 1,657 Ohioans representing all 88 counties, have died with COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the majority of hospital admissions and deaths are among adults ages 60 and older, but nearly half of reported COVID-19 cases in Ohio are among adults ages 30-59; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the common symptoms of COVID-19, the virus is believed to cause other effects such as the risk of stroke. COVID-19 is also suspected to be impacting the pediatric population, including children without underlying chronic disease, with atypical and at times devastating effects; and

WHEREAS, the risk to the health of all Ohioans remains high because no vaccine or cure is available currently, and the virus will continue to spread as businesses reopen and interactions increase; and

WHEREAS, although some restrictions can be loosened our individual obligation to each other matters now more than ever.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Amy Acton, MD, MPH, Director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), pursuant to the authority granted to me in R.C. 3701.14 to "investigate or make inquiry as to the cause of disease or illness, including contagious, infectious, epidemic, pandemic, or endemic conditions, and take prompt action to control and suppress it" issue the following "Ohioans Protecting Ohioans Urgent Health Advisory" that recommends that Ohioans continue to stay home as much as possible, but maintains mandates limiting large groups and requiring safe business conditions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the State of Ohio:

1. **Elderly people and those who are vulnerable as a result of illness should take additional precautions.** People at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including those who are elderly and those who are sick, are strongly urged (but not required) to stay in their residence to the extent possible except as necessary to seek medical care. According to the CDC, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 include people who are 65 years or older and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:

    a. People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma;
    b. People who have serious heart conditions;
    c. People who are immune compromised;
    d. People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher);
    e. People with diabetes;
    f. People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; and
    g. People with liver disease

    The elderly and those with underlying health conditions are urged to avoid places where they are likely to be exposed to an increased number of people. When out in public, they should wear a mask unless not otherwise indicated. They should also practice good hand-washing hygiene.

2. **Other Ohioans.** All other Ohioans who are not considered high-risk are advised to take precautions to limit the spread of this disease and rely on their sense of personal responsibility and accountability to others when leaving home. Because individuals can carry the virus and spread it prior to or without showing symptoms, this Urgent Health Advisory recommends (but does not require) that Ohioans who are not considered high-risk stay at their place of residence when possible with the intent of lowering the rate of spread of COVID-19.

Amy Acton, MD, MPH
Director of Health

May 20, 2020