

Hi Everyone,

It goes without saying that the last month has been difficult for all.

I think all of us have many questions and concerns in the midst of this pandemic. I have many perspectives on these times — as a physician, public health graduate, business owner, individual, friend, family member, and even pet owner! I'd like to update you and weigh in on what I know and have researched and what I foresee over the next few months. I've been following this situation closely since January and this is my take on things.

1) **The Pandemic-** Covid-19, also known as SARS-Covid-2 or the novel coronavirus, is a new form of an old virus. There are multiple types of coronaviruses, several make up illnesses we get every year during cold season. Covid-19 is a mutation of one of these coronaviruses. Even though you may have had one of those viruses in the past, COVID-19 is a new virus and none of us have ever been exposed to it and thus none of us have immunity to it. Many of us will get this virus over time but hopefully it will happen in the future after a vaccine is developed.

2) **How is this virus different from the flu?** Simple. It is **AT LEAST 2-3 times more infectious**, much more likely to put you in the hospital, and 10-20 times more likely to kill you. There is no vaccine available like we have for influenza which lowers your likelihood of hospitalization from the flu by 30% and risk of ICU admission by 80%.

3) **Why are we “Sheltering in Place”?** Covid-19 is a virus that is easy to spread and many get very sick.

Of those with symptoms, 13-20% are hospitalized and 5% end up in the ICU. Without these severe social distancing measures we might be faced with a MILLION or more deaths and many more hospitalizations. The present measures are to slow the spread, lower the total numbers, and most importantly slow the onslaught as to not overwhelm hospitals and clinics. In addition, recent studies have shown that many more people are likely infected with Covid-19 than the present total suggests. As many as 50-75% of those with Covid-19 may have no symptoms (asymptomatic carriers) thus more than doubling the total number of cases.

4) **How do I get Covid-19?** One of three ways: 1) Droplet/hand to face. Coughing, sneezing, talking and maybe even breathing onto a surface releasing large droplets of saliva. We touch them and touch our eyes, face, or mouth and get infected. This also includes touching surfaces like door knobs and counters. Overall this is the most significant method of transmission. 2) Spread by coughing, sneezing, talking or breathing into the air and then inhaling small droplets into our lungs, nose or them landing on our face. This is overall less likely and reduced by keeping 6 feet apart (social distancing) and wearing face masks to protect from spreading droplets. 3) Aerosolized spread after coughing or sneezing into the air but more often with medical procedures like intubation. Infection happens by breathing in the particles floating in the air. Not as common overall. Very important for everyone to cover their mouth with their arm when coughing or sneezing and of course medical personnel to wear protective equipment (PPE).

5) **How do I protect myself from getting Covid-19?** **STAY AT HOME** for now, keep six feet from others in public or the work place, wash hands frequently and/or use hand sanitizer and **DO NOT TOUCH YOUR FACE IN PUBLIC**. **Wear a face mask in public** to protect you from potentially spreading Covid-19 to others.

6) **When will the present shelter in place be over?** Unclear. Most models or estimates for New Mexico suggest returning to work activity by the end of May or June. This is dependent on how

well we follow social distancing recommendations. June is a good bet.

7) What will be needed to “open up again”? A consistent drop in cases and deaths for two (2) weeks. It is unclear if a certain level or number of cases needs to be reached. Each state will likely open at different times. We will NOT return to a pre-Covid-19 lifestyle initially when we “open-up”. Several measures will persist: 1) Continued social distancing of 6ft 2) Face masks in public 3) Limitation of gathering size (my personal guess is less than 50 people). We will need to test A LOT and to be able to track and watch the population and self-quarantine those exposed. **TESTING WILL BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN ORDER TO RELEASE SHELTER AT HOME.** This is a major problem as we are not seeing the degree of availability of the tests needed. I do foresee the use of WIDESPREAD RAPID Covid-19 TESTING in order to allow some types of gatherings and activities. These measures will continue until there is a vaccine, hopefully in the Fall of 2021. Treatments are being tested, and some look promising, which can also help treat early infection with Covid-19 or protect those exposed but not symptomatic.

8) What factors increase my risk of getting very sick with Covid-19? Age over 70, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, significant obesity, autoimmune disease, smoking of any kind or vaping. ANY age, however, can get severely ill with Covid-19. *The addition of other health issues increases your risk at any age.*

9) How has the pandemic affected The Doc Spa? We are still open and will see patients in the office for obstetrics, problem gynecology and family practice, post operative patients and BioTE pellet patients when needed. We are doing telephone or FaceTime visits as well and we are enjoying keeping in touch with you. We have a protocol in place to prevent exposure to others coming to the office for visits. The office is regularly cleaned and wiped down. The medical spa is effectively closed. **We are scheduling appointments for June for all areas and I'm hopeful that we will be able to see patients before then.**

We are doing well and have yet to see any confirmed Covid-19 patients in our office. The hospitals are all preparing for an increase in admissions in the coming weeks and have stopped doing any elective procedures due to concerns over supplies. They have also limited access to the hospitals and have required screening before entering.

I hope this information has been helpful and I sincerely hope all of you are healthy and hanging in there in these difficult times. We will be okay.
Please contact us if you have questions.

Stay safe and careful and hope to see you soon.

Julian Rowe, MD, MPH