

JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE FAMILY PHYSICIANS AND PRIMARY CARE NURSE PRACTITIONERS OF ELGIN COUNTY

March 27, 2020

To all our patients and the citizens of St. Thomas and Elgin County,

There is no doubt that NOW is the time for all of us to do our part to curb the spread of COVID-19. While there are only a small number of cases confirmed in Elgin at this time, we know that this is under-reported as we are only swabbing people admitted to hospital. We now have community spread of the virus within Canada and Southwestern Ontario and time is of the essence for implementing changes to “flatten the curve” before this pandemic overwhelms our healthcare system. As the physicians and nurse practitioners who have dedicated their careers and their lives to keeping you healthy, PLEASE heed our advice.

The time is now to **STAY AT HOME WITH YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY.**

Do NOT:

- Attend playdates with friends from school – try virtual playdates!
- Go to crowded places
- Have family or social gatherings such as dinner parties – use technology to keep up with friends and family!
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Please, do what you can to AVOID contact with people outside of your immediate family as much as possible. Work from home. Do what you must to isolate in your home. Keep trips to the grocery store short, and only send one family member.

For local business owners, we fully appreciate that temporarily closing your business will be of great hardship for you.

- For those of you who own restaurants/bars: we thank you for continuing to provide take-out/delivery options only, as per our provincial mandate
- For those of you in other industries that closed before you were required to, thank you.
- For those of you who are considered an essential service, please do NOT request “sick notes” from your employees. In the coming weeks the physicians in our community will be “on duty” 24/7 and may not be able to provide these notes. If you are asked to provide a sick note, please note that the Ontario government has introduced legislation that will eliminate the need to provide a sick note during the COVID-19 outbreak.

If you have travelled ANYWHERE OUTSIDE OF CANADA, please SELF-ISOLATE FOR 14 DAYS, WHETHER YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OR NOT. If you develop symptoms after your return home you must self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days from the time of your return, or until 24 hours AFTER your symptoms have resolved, WHICHEVER IS LONGER. For most people who develop a fever and/or new or worsening cough after returning to Canada from

international travel, testing is no longer recommended. You are simply asked to stay home and self-isolate.

For information on how to self-isolate, go to: <https://www.hpph.ca/en/about-us/covid-19-response-resources.aspx>.

Monitor yourself for symptoms while you are in self-isolation. For information on self-monitoring, please go to: <https://www.hpph.ca/en/about-us/covid-19-response-resources.aspx>.

If you develop a fever, new or worse cough, or shortness of breath please access the “Self-Assessment Tool” created by the Ontario Ministry of Health. This tool can be found at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-self-assessment>. Mild symptoms can be treated at home with rest, fluids and acetaminophen.

You may also call your family physician’s office, Ontario Telehealth (1-866-797-0000) or your local Public Health Unit (Southwestern Public Health <https://swpublichealth.ca> 1-800-922-0096 x9).

CHANGES TO OFFICE PROCEDURES

You may be asked to reschedule appointments with your family physician and to change how you access care. These changes may include having appointments by telephone or on-line/virtually or refilling your prescriptions at a local pharmacy. **Please be flexible.** Take confidence in the fact that all changes implemented are done so with the sole intent of protecting you, your families, our health care providers, and our community from COVID-19 and making the best use of our collective health care resources at this time.

In coordination, we are hoping to spread the message broadly. This is not just one of us advising. **This is your body of health care expertise begging you to heed our warning. STAY HOME** so that we can give our healthcare system a fighting chance through what will undoubtedly be its biggest challenge ever.

Thank you and please, stay safe and keep yourselves, and the rest of us, healthy.

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