CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19) INFORMATION SHEET

What is Covid-19?

Coronavirus is one of many common viruses that can cause respiratory infections, from a mild common cold to pneumonia. Covid-19 is not a bacteria, hence there is no antibiotic available to treat this viral germ. Vaccines are currently being aggressively researched around the world and there is optimism that safe and effective vaccines will become available as early as winter, 2020-21. This new strain is known as **Covid-19** (#19 for year 2019 in which the infectious disease originated); it is also known as **SARS-CoV-2** by scientists. It apparently originated in Wuhan, China then spread rapidly in China and then globally due to international travel on planes, trains, cruise ships, etc. All 50 US States have Covid-19 cases with the greatest concentration in the NY City region. Here in GA, Fulton County and the Albany, GA region have the highest concentration of cases but there are continuing new cases reported throughout the state. Concern exists for future flare-ups in cases, hospitalizations and deaths (known as "surges" in the media) this fall-winter coinciding with the annual flu season.

This Covid-19 strain is more contagious (it is able to spread more easily from person-to-person) than the common flu strains each winter. It also has the potential to cause a more severe inflammatory response by the immune system leading to severe pneumonia, secondary bacterial infection, organ failure, or death from these complications. In the past 10-20 years other coronavirus outbreaks have occurred: China (SARS, 2003) and the Middle East (MERS, 2012). These other coronavirus strains, while also very serious, were contained sooner before becoming global pandemics.

Who is at most risk of a life threatening case of Covid-19?

Data suggests primarily the elderly (over 65yo) and/or those with underlying medical problems (heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease, cancers, depressed immunity, respiratory conditions such as COPD, etc.). However, there have been many cases of healthy young adults (20s-50s) and children who have had serious hospitalizations or deaths from Covid-19, just far less than the others listed above.

When should I consult a doctor if my child is not feeling well?

Covid-19 usually presents with fever, cough, sore throat, and/or shortness of breath although other flu-like symptoms may also be present; if your child has any of these symptoms then call the office for advice

Does my child need to be tested for Covid-19?

Sufficient tests have been an ongoing challenge nationally as well as here in GA. Currently, we have limited testing available at the office for Covid-19. In needed and available, this test would be sent to either Quest or LabCorp and a result would be available within 2-3days. If our office does not have the ability to test then we will refer you to an appropriate location to test your child. More rapid turnaround testing will hopefully be more widely available within the next few months heading into the next school year. At present, testing remains generally recommended only for those with actual Covid-19 symptoms or for those with a known direct exposure to someone with Covid-19 but who may be asymptomatic. Any adult or child who has tested positive but remains stable (does not require hospitalization) should remain at home for at least two weeks and, if needed, be rechecked by a doctor periodically to be sure the illness is not worsening.

How do I avoid catching Covid-19?

Because it is a respiratory virus it is spread from viral particles transmitted through the air or by direct contact from one person's hands to the next person. The virus can also live for a number of days on surfaces (i.e. counter tops). The virus then enters the body through touching one's mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth).

• Stay at least 6 feet away from others; especially avoid those with respiratory symptoms (cough, congestion)

• Do not share cups, utensils, towels or other personal items

• Try to avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) as much as possible, particularly when in public (i.e. shopping)

• Avoid shaking hands with others; do an elbow bump, hand waive, or mimic a touchless High-5

• Wash your hands (or use hand sanitizer) frequently, especially when returning from public areas; wash hands and wrists with any brand of common soap for approximately 30 seconds

• Clean and wash all purchased fruits/veggies; clean all items brought inside your home with a diluted bleach spray

How do we all work together to prevent the spread of Covid-19?

As a society, we need to do the right thing to protect each other, and particularly the elderly and those with chronic medical problems (whether children or adults). The optimal way to do this is by "**Social Distancing**" – avoiding or minimizing any community gathering (religious services, weddings, funerals, concerts, sports events, sit-in restaurants, etc.). When doing necessary shopping or any other community function it is now advised that everyone wear a mask.

• Leisure travel is currently not recommended

• Cancel/Reschedule any US or International travel/vacations that involve cruises, airplane flights, trains, etc. where one would be mingling with the general public

• Limit the number of family members in contact regularly with the elderly or those with underlying medical problems; be sure to wash hands thoroughly before and after visiting or caring for these individuals; it is strongly advised for you or your child to wear a face mask when visiting the elderly or a person with a chronic medical problem

• Everyone should try to keep a safe distance from each other; approximately 6 feet is advised to avoid spreading virus through the air (**many of us are ASYMPTOMATIC CARRIERS of the virus**)

• Wash hands thoroughly (or use hand sanitizer) after visiting a public area (shopping, appointments, banking, etc.) and try to avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) as much as possible when in public

• Stay home from work/school if you have signs of illness (fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing) and contact your doctor's office ASAP

What CAN I do outside that is still safe?

Being outdoors is safe as long as you keep a safe distance from others (approximately 6 feet is considered best); taking a walk on a nature trail, bicycle riding, jogging or other individual outdoor sports are certainly safe to enjoy

I am pregnant. Should I worry about my own health or my baby?

Current data suggests that pregnant women are NOT more vulnerable to catching Covid-19 and they are not at higher risk of progressing to more severe illness or death (**this is currently different from the FLU; FLU in pregnancy IS known to be a higher risk for mother and baby**). It is highly unlikely that a pregnant mother sick with Covid-19 can easily transmit the virus to the baby through the birth process itself.

Can I safely breastfeed my baby if I have Covid-19?

Yes. Studies so far have not found Covid-19 in breastmilk. Previous other coronavirus epidemics (SARS and MERS) also did not find coronavirus in breastmilk. Covid-19 is not likely to be spread via ingestion into the intestinal tract. However, a breastfeeding mom is in very close breathing and touching contact with her baby. Hence, wearing a mask and washing hands regularly would be most helpful if a mom is sick (same as if a breastfeeding mom had the flu).

Website Resources:

CDC – Updated Covid-19 Information: www.cdc.gov

CHOA - Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Information: www.choa.org/covid19

NY Times – Updated Covid-19 News and Statistics (USA/World); www.nytimes.com