



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1 Geneva Road, Brewster, NY 10509 ■ 845-808-1390

www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MaryEllen Odell
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Erin Pascaretti, Public Information Officer, 845-808-1390, x43262

Health Department Urges “Call Before you Go,” Holds Daily Coronavirus Briefings with County Agencies

BREWSTER, NY—With the community spread of Coronavirus in neighboring Westchester County, the PCDOH is educating the community on the importance of calling before arriving at the doctor, emergency room or urgent care if you suspect you may need medical attention related to exposure to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The PCDOH has instituted daily internal Coronavirus briefings with key partner agencies and organizations to keep all necessary groups informed on the latest information.

“Residents should be reassured that our Health Commissioner and his staff are working many hours with their state counterparts on this evolving situation,” said MaryEllen Odell, Putnam County Executive. “The department is in continual contact with the New York State Department of Health, with up-to-date guidance from the CDC in Atlanta, the lead public health agency in the U.S.”

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, Health Commissioner of Putnam County, expanded saying, “For weeks, we have been working closely with and preparing alongside our emergency personnel, law enforcement and our school districts to keep them informed about this continuing and rapidly changing situation. We have started daily briefings with partners so ensure everyone is prepared. With the increase in testing, we will not be surprised if we identify a positive case. Should that happen, rest assured we will share that information with the public as soon as it is confirmed. At this time we want all community members to be aware of exactly how they could access care, should the need arise.

“Because COVID-19 is a new virus the complete clinical picture is not fully understood at this time. Reported symptoms have ranged from mild to severe,” Dr. Nesheiwat continued. “Older people and those with certain underlying medical conditions such as heart or lung disease and diabetes for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.”

The “Call Before you Go” plan outlines how residents can get care if they need it and prompts people to make a decision to seek care or testing in consult with their primary care provider. For residents who develop flu-like symptoms and are not short of breath, the best thing to do is take one’s temperature and limit contact with others by simply staying home. Individuals who are concerned about exposure to COVID-19 should call their primary care provider. New York State has also established a COVID-19 hotline (1-888-364-3065). For anyone feeling more

severely ill, and in particular, with trouble breathing, the key message is to seek medical care without delay, but always with a call before you go. It is important everyone first call their healthcare provider, urgent care or local emergency room and tell them of any possible risk for Coronavirus exposure. If you call 911, the dispatcher should be given the same exposure information.

Also very important is that all residents be conscientious about normal, standard precautions, relevant for any communicable disease. This includes washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose with unwashed hands. Do not share personal items such as water bottles. Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick and if you are sick, stay home. Remain home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (without taking fever-reducing medication) or signs of a fever (i.e., chills, feeling warm, flushed appearance). Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or with a tissue, then immediately discard the tissue in the trash. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. These guidelines, followed carefully, will make a difference in community spread of the disease.

The final take-away the Health Commissioner advises is to follow the advice of reputable health authorities. “There are rumors in the community and via social media,” Dr. Nesheiwat said. “We will keep the community informed of this evolving situation via our website and our closely monitored social media accounts, as well as through information released to the media. Responding to individual rumors becomes time-consuming and we aim to maximize efficiency.”

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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