



CLAYTON COUNTY

Board of Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19: Lent

By Dr. Michele Dikkers, Clayton County Board of Health Chairperson

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I like sweets. It comes honestly, I come from a long line of sweet tooths. So, every year when Lent rolls around, it is time to give up sweets, some years I would narrow it down to something specific, like chocolate. Lent, the longest 6 ½ weeks of the year! Then, there it is, Easter morning...Easter baskets, full of chocolate and sweets! Yummm! It takes restraint to not eat everything in the basket, but I know better. I know what would happen if everything in the basket was eaten in one day. I would have regrets.

COVID-19 has overwhelmed us. We don't know what day it is, each day blends into the next. We are stuck in our homes. The place that would typically be our sanctuary and haven, now feels like a prison. We have heard more about social distancing in the past two months than ever before. We miss our parents, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, in laws, friends, even those we work with. And just when we were about to think we couldn't take it anymore, we found our groove. This ain't so bad, now adapting to "the new normal".

And then...Governor Reynolds started talking about easing restrictions. Yahoo!

The recommendations are to do it slowly and responsibly. Continue to monitor the status of the state and make adjustments as appropriate.

The Governor's proclamation is clear, loosening restrictions does not mean disregarding our social responsibility to each other. Planned gatherings of more than 10 people are still prohibited in the state of Iowa by State Code.

The COVID-19 virus is considered dangerous with unfortunate outcomes for some. The challenges of the virus are many, it doesn't act like any virus we have ever seen, there are very few treatment options and it does not discriminate. It is true that the elderly population will have a more difficult time surviving, however, all age groups are at risk. Stories of healthy athletic 16 - 40-year-olds becoming ill and suddenly dying are not unusual with this disease.

The proclamation from May 6th allows us to return to restaurants, as long as we sit at a table at least six feet from another table. We can head to the stores, there should be limits on the number of shoppers, no more than 50% of normal number of shoppers, wearing masks and staying six feet away from others.

We can go camping, with appropriate space between campers and staying at your own camp site and staying six feet away from campers from other camp sites.

Hospitals and clinics are responsibly and slowly opening up services. Therapy departments are opening and keeping appropriate spacing between rehab patients. Masks will be worn in all departments.

As we move forward, the safety of the patients is of utmost importance. All necessary precautions will be taken.

Likewise, as members of your community, it is being expected by the Governor's office, the Iowa Department of Health and the CDC, that we will continue to protect each other by following these simple guidelines:

- stay at home if you don't have to go out
- wear a mask when you do go out
- wear a mask when you work with the public
- continue social distancing at least six feet from one another

So, though it is tempting, like the basket of Easter candy, practice restraint. It is a sure way to prevent regrets.

Remember, we are in this together.

(of note, the time we have been under the COVID-19 restrictions in Iowa has been less than the length of a Lenten season)