Since coronavirus is a new concern, we are all learning as we go. There are a lot of updates, recommendations, and news articles that can be confusing, coming from many different sources. In addition, there is a great deal of misinformation being shared about coronavirus. TIHAN is sharing the following information from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other official sources to help make sure you have up-to-date and accurate information.

**Top Five Things to Know**

1. **The main way COVID is transmitted** is through virus particles in the air. These are particles that are exhaled from the mouths and noses of people who are infected with coronavirus, through actions like sneezing, coughing, talking, singing, and breathing.

   What that means for you:

   **A. Handwashing and cleaning surfaces** are always important practices, but the **top prevention behaviors** we can utilize are **wearing a mask** and **maintaining social distance** when we have to go out in public.

   → **More on wearing a mask:**
   - Touch only the straps when putting on, taking off, or adjusting your mask.
   - Masks should fit snugly over the very top of your nose and down to your chin.
   - Disposable masks should be worn only once, then thrown away.
   - Cloth masks should be washed before the first use, and then after each use.
   - Depending on what material your mask is made of, you can use a washing machine or wash it by hand, and then use a dryer or let it air-dry. The mask must be completely dry before you can use it again.
   - Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after removing your mask.

   → **More on social distancing:**
   - Make sure to keep 6 feet between you and any other person who is not a member of your household.
   - If you need to hand something to someone, you can set it down, walk 6 feet away, and then ask the other person to pick it up.
   - What does a distance of 6 feet look like? Try measuring 6 feet at home. Maybe it’s the length of your couch, or the width of your bathroom. Get to know what that distance feels like, and have something that you can envision to help you keep that 6-foot distance from others when you’re out in public.

   **B. Avoid crowded public places** as much as you can. It can be difficult to stay home and avoid larger groups. Find ways to stay busy at home. Take up new hobbies, read, watch an interesting TV show, call friends and family on the phone. And many activities, like support groups and TIHAN’s Living Well with HIV classes, are using an online format so that you can join from home via your phone or computer. Also, TIHAN has coloring pages to help keep you occupied at home.

   **C. Crowded rooms in public such as bars, restaurants, and churches are especially risky.**

2. **Some people have COVID-19 and do not know they have it. They might not show any symptoms, but they can unknowingly pass the virus to those around them.**

   What that means for you:

   **A.** Just like with HIV, you can’t tell if someone has the virus by looking at them. That’s why it’s important to assume everyone might have COVID, and stay 6 feet apart (or more), wear a mask (and protect your eyes if you can), stay in well-ventilated areas (especially indoors), and disinfect surfaces that are commonly touched by others.

   **B. You want to prevent getting COVID-19. And if you have COVID but don’t show symptoms, you want to avoid passing it along to others around you.**
3. Recently, researchers have acknowledged that the virus can spread farther than only the immediate space nearby, and that it can also stay in the air longer than a few seconds after someone sneezes or coughs or yells.

What that means for you:

A. It is safer to wear masks and also stay 6 feet apart from others, especially indoors, because we don’t know where or how long the virus might be lingering in the air.

B. Doing things outdoors whenever possible is safer because the continuous fresh and circulating air helps disperse the virus. For example, instead of going to visit a friend and sitting 6 feet apart in their house, consider going outside and sitting 6 feet apart on the porch, or go for a walk together.

C. When indoors with others, use ventilation like running a fan or keeping the windows open, and limit the amount of time spent inside.

4. Another recent finding is that people with COVID, whether they get very sick or not, can have symptoms that linger for months. Extreme fatigue is commonly reported, and other lasting ailments include damage to the kidneys, nervous system, heart, and lungs. There are some treatments that can help people who get sick, but ultimately, there is not yet a COVID-19 vaccine to prevent this disease and no cure for those who have it.

What that means for you:

That should help us all understand the importance of prevention, prevention, prevention!

5. Anyone can contract COVID-19, but people with these conditions are most susceptible to getting the virus and having serious complications:

- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
- Asthma (moderate to severe)
- Cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Cystic fibrosis
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- Liver disease
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissue)
- Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Four Additional Recommendations

1. Wash your hands often, with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds — especially:
   - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
   - Before preparing food or eating
   - Before needing to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth
   - After using the restroom
   - After leaving a public place
   - After handling your mask

   If hand washing is not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
   - Cover all surfaces of your hands. Then rub them together until they feel completely dry.
2. **When you need to cough or sneeze**, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. Do not spit. Throw used tissues in the trash, then wash your hands.

3. **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces every day.
   - This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, drawer handles, phones, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
   - Cleaning the surface first means using detergent or soap and water.
   - After cleaning, disinfecting the surface means using a household disinfecting product.
   - Wear gloves to clean and disinfect, and wash your hands after removing the gloves.

4. **Generally, gloves are not recommended**, except when you are cleaning/disinfecting and if you are taking care of someone who is sick. **However, with a compromised immune system and flu season upon us, you might consider using gloves when utilizing public transportation or when shopping.**
   - Use gloves that are made of nitrile or latex.
   - Use disposable gloves, and remove them and throw them away after each place or trip.
   - When removing a glove, touch only the cuff area, and pull it off inside-out.
   - Wash your hands after removing gloves.
   - Do not touch your face with your gloves, as this will expose you to whatever your gloves have touched and defeat the purpose of wearing gloves.

---

### Symptoms of COVID-19 Infection and What to Do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever or chills</td>
<td>Loss of taste or smell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Sore throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortness of breath or trouble breathing</td>
<td>Congestion or runny nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Nausea or vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle or body aches</td>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any of these symptoms, please stay home, avoid being around other people, and contact your doctor as soon as possible. Free COVID testing sites are available throughout Tucson and Pima County:

Call 2-1-1 or visit [pima.gov/health](http://pima.gov/health) and on the right, under “COVID-19 Information”, click on “Testing Centers”.

---

### Another Important Topic: Flu Season!

This year, public health officials worry that flu season, which already puts a strain on hospitals, could be especially harmful on top of the coronavirus challenge. They are asking everyone to get a flu shot and do your part to help reduce potential harm to you and others.

Tucson’s own HIV doctors at El Rio SIA encouraged us to share the following with you:

* Flu shots are especially important for people living with HIV, and it’s best to get a shot right now to have the best protection. (High dose flu vaccines are recommended for patients over 65.)
* Please speak to your medical provider about which vaccine is right for you and schedule your flu shot TODAY!

Flu shots are also available throughout Tucson and Pima County:

Call 2-1-1 or visit [pima.gov/health](http://pima.gov/health) and towards the bottom, on the “Services” tab, look for “Flu” in the “Education and Outreach” category.