

GH Resource Guide

COVID-19 Peak in Northern Virginia and Treatment Guidance | Featuring Dr. Maggie Gloria, Medical Director, Goodwin House Hospice | April 28, 2020

About this Resource Guide:

This guide, which is presented in a Question & Answer (Q&A) format, was adapted from a webinar that featured Dr. Gloria on Thursday, April 16, 2020. In the Q&A, Dr. Gloria answers frequently asked questions about what it means for COVID-19 to reach its peak, and about how to care for a loved one that has tested positive.

About Dr. Maggie Gloria

Dr. Maggie Gloria is the Medical Director for Goodwin House Hospice, a Medicare-certified hospice program that serves older adults across Northern Virginia during their end of life.

Dr. Gloria completed her fellowship training in Hospice and Palliative Medicine and Internal Medicine at George Washington University. She is board certified in Internal Medicine, Hospice and Palliative Medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM). Dr. Gloria advanced beyond the ABIM certifications to earn the HMCD to also become a Hospice Medical Director. Prior to joining GHI, Dr. Gloria served on the inpatient palliative care team at George Washington University Hospital.



Q. At what daily infection rate as officially reported for Virginia and/or individual Virginia communities do public health experts feel it will be safe to resume normal activities?

A. The short answer would be that rate of daily infection needs to stabilize and then start going down for a significant period of time before we even start to consider resuming normal activities. But this is a question that many governors and members of President Trump’s administration are dealing with now.



This issue is being looked at in terms of “when is it safe to reopen the economy?” Public health and economic officials are coming together to work toward a plan moving forward. It’s going to be an issue of balancing public health with the deleterious effects of mandated social distancing. “Reopening” will likely happen strategically in stages with each geographic location being different. For example, New York City and the state of Washington will likely reopen before us because it looks like their cases have peaked, whereas ours have not.

Q. I’ve been hearing that COVID-19 is deadlier than the seasonal flu. Is that true?

A. It’s difficult to answer this, because we don’t have all of the data yet. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) keep track of flu-related deaths but the data always lags by a few years. For the 2019-2020 flu season to date (October 2019 to April 4th, 2020) there have been an estimated 24,000 to 62,000 deaths caused by the flu (this data is not complete, but we can estimate it’s at least 24,000 deaths in the United States over a 5 month span).

COVID-19 has not been around as long as the flu. The first case reported in the U.S. was on January 20th, 2020. There have been more than 24,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in the United States since then – a period of 3 months. Keep in mind that experts feel that the number of cases and deaths related to COVID-19 are being grossly under-reported because of widespread testing shortages. Also keep in mind that the country as a whole has been social distancing in some form or another since mid-March.

The take home point is that COVID-19 has caused at least as many deaths as the seasonal flu, in a shorter period of time, and despite social distancing. Therefore, it’s a reasonable conclusion that COVID-19 may be deadlier and more contagious than the flu.

Q. If spouses/partners are living together and one of the partners tests positive, what is the point of isolating the infected one from their spouse/partner, when he/she has likely already been contagious for several days?

A. Just because two people have been sharing the same living space doesn't guarantee that the other "healthy" spouse/partner has been infected. When the sick person isolates, it's in the hopes that the other person isn't sick yet. The real problem is that when someone is the sickest (and probably the most contagious) they will likely need some care and support from the other partner in the home. Even still, it's not impossible for one partner to not get sick so it's worth trying.

Q. Can someone who has tested positive for the virus and quarantined for 14 days afterwards still infect other people?

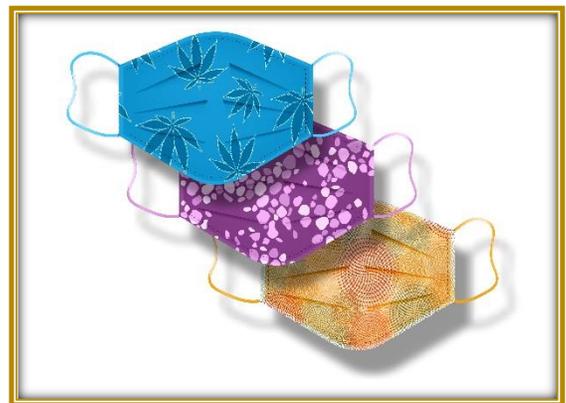
A. Technically, there have been cases where an infected person has been noted to be shedding the virus for as long as 28 days. That is rare, though, and generally someone is much less contagious after 14 days and after upper respiratory symptoms have improved.

Q. What is the prognosis of how the pandemic will develop in the Northern VA area?

A. Earlier, I talked a little about what the forecast is looking like in Virginia as a whole. The vast majority of cases in Virginia are actually here in Northern Virginia. However, this area is more densely populated, which can account for the higher number of cases. We also have more hospitals and healthcare facilities here than other parts of the state, so all in all we are faring okay.

Q. Why are we now being advised to cover our faces in public?

A. Because this is a new strain of coronavirus, much is still unknown. As we learn more about this specific virus, recommendations will likely change. Covering your face in public is based on new information that asymptomatic people can spread the virus.



Q. Can masks be sterilized between uses, or do you have to use a new one every time? If they can be sterilized, what is the best procedure for doing so?

A. If your mask is made out of cloth it should be washed in the washer with hot water and dried in the dryer after every use. If the mask is a surgical mask, there are several options to disinfect them between uses, but keep in mind that none of these options have been studied and proven to work.

Ultra Violet (UV) light is one option. I usually leave my mask in sunlight for 15 minutes on each side when I get home (hung in the window sill). If you have a small UV sanitizer at home for your cell phone or shoes you can use that also to sterilize your mask

The virus is very sensitive to heat and humidity so another option is to use your oven to steam clean your mask. If your oven can be set low enough, set it to 150°F and put a pan of water on the lower rack. You can place the mask on a piece of foil on the higher rack for 15 minutes. Do not put your mask in an oven that gets hotter than 150 degrees because it will damage the mask. Also, do not put your surgical mask in the washer.

If you have the proper apparatus in the kitchen you could steam the mask but keep in mind the temperature is harder to monitor and control, so don't let your mask get too hot.

I have not seen any expert opinion that supports microwaving surgical masks.

Q. Can I go outside for walks?

A. Yes, the weather is beautiful and getting a walk in is great for physical and emotional health. Just remember to cover your face and stay 6 feet apart from other people.



Q. I have run out of anti-bacterial wipes, hand sanitizer, gloves and commercial masks, and I can't find any more in the stores. Is the only alternative to make them myself? Or is it just as safe to keep washing with regular soap and water and not touch anything that might be infected until the supplies become more available?

A. I would recommend you make your own mask in the meantime so that you can cover your face when in public. Hand sanitizer and gloves are not superior to washing your hands well with soap and water, so being conscientious about not touching your face with dirty hands and washing your hands frequently is in itself a good defense against the disease.

Q. What do I do if I get sick?

A. Most people who contract COVID-19 have mild symptoms and can self-treat at home. However, you should always call your doctor and inform them if you have symptoms. Follow your doctor's direction for treatment. Anyone who falls ill should keep in contact with their primary care provider and let them know if symptoms worsen.

Here are some suggestions if you are self-treating at home:

- Medical Supplies
 - Cough drops (can be helpful for a dry cough or sore throat)
 - Throat lozenges
 - Over-the-counter cold medicines
 - Saline nasal spray
 - Thermometer
 - Pulse oximeter (available in most retail drug stores)
- Nutrition Supplies
 - Chicken soup
 - Vitamin C tablets
 - Electrolyte-replacement drinks (if using sports drinks, dilute 50% with water)
 - High-calorie, nutrient-rich foods like applesauce, avocados, bananas, and apples

As with any flu-like virus, it's important to stay hydrated. Enjoy your favorite herbal tea or make your own herbal blend at home. Ginger, honey and lemon are thought to be particularly helpful.

More Resources

For more information and to benefit from other Goodwin House Resource Guides, please visit the COVID-19 page on our website at <https://www.goodwinhouse.org/COVID-19>.

- [Stay Healthy Guide](#)
- [Tips for Staying Calm Through Peaceful & Creative Activities](#)

