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Please Follow Public Health Expert Advice:

Thorough Hand Washing, Social Distancing Help Protect Everyone, Especially Vulnerable Populations

(LOUISVILLE, KY - March 13, 2020) Two statewide health advocacy organizations are urging Kentuckians to take [state public health experts' advice](#) seriously to help prevent the rapid spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus in the Commonwealth. The Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky (FHKY) and the Kentucky Medical Association (KMA) say social distancing, frequent and thorough hand washing, and staying home if you're sick are especially critical to protecting the state's vulnerable populations.

"While your individual risk of getting COVID-19 or suffering serious complications may be low, that's not the case for many Kentuckians whose immune systems can't fight a serious illness like this novel coronavirus," said Ben Chandler, FHKY president and CEO. "The steps that public health experts are recommending are based on decades of research - some are simple and some require a bit of sacrifice, but they are proven to protect vulnerable family members, friends and neighbors such as those who are aged, going through cancer treatment, or dealing with diabetes, heart disease or other chronic conditions."

"The good news is we know how to prevent this virus from spreading so quickly that it overwhelms our health care system," said KMA President and Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky Board Chair Brent Wright, M.D. "COVID-19 is highly contagious. Individuals, facilities, states and countries that have not taken proven precautionary measures are adding to this dangerous global pandemic. Taking the recommended steps now is the only way to limit the number of infections, serious cases and deaths in Kentucky."

Measures recommended by Kentucky public health officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with fever, coughing, sneezing, and difficulty breathing. To avoid close contact, stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. To avoid coughing into your hands, you can cough into your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

Adults over 60 and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease seem to be at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness. If you are at increased risk for COVID-19, it is especially important for you to take the following actions to reduce your risk of exposure:

- Stay at home as much as possible.
- Make sure you have access to several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for prolonged periods of time.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact (6 feet away) and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds.

"If you are ill and are concerned you may have COVID-19, please call your physician but refrain from seeking care in a physician's office, emergency room or hospital, where you may spread the virus to others," Dr. Wright said.

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services has created a special COVID-19 website that is regularly updated at [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19), and also has opened a hotline for questions: 1-800-722-5725."

Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky | www.healthy-ky.org