

3/24/20

We wanted to share some updated information about the Coronavirus illness for our families. Because the situation is still evolving, we will update this information regularly.

This weekend our area had its first cases of COVID-19. Additionally the state of Virginia is seeing growing numbers of cases in several heavily populated areas which means there is now community spread. This means that even traveling to areas within our state now increases one's risk of exposure. With community spread occurring, social distancing and isolating becomes even more important to slow its progress. By slowing the spread, we can protect those at greatest risk of this illness.

In general, current evidence still suggests that the illness is often mild in the pediatric population. Elderly people, especially with underlying health conditions are at greatest risk. The most common symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Testing for the virus has expanded in our area but still somewhat limited. Valley Health has established an ambulatory testing sites for physicians to send patient for testing. Currently it can take up to 7 days to get the results back through that process. More ill patients needing hospitalization can be tested through the hospital and the State Health labs with results available in several days. Private practice offices do not have testing abilities at this time and won't in the foreseeable future.

We have responded by changing our scheduling procedures and adding the ability to have telemedicine visits.

We offer a few common sense suggestions:

- If you are concerned your child might have been exposed, please contact our office to speak to one of our physicians before coming in for care. We can then advise you about the safest way to receive the proper evaluation and care.
- Avoid bringing large numbers of extra people to the office for patient appointments.
- Use caution when involving elderly family members in care of an ill child
- Use good hygiene techniques – frequent hand washing, cleaning of high touch surfaces, good nutrition and hydration.
- If you feel you need to come to the evening or weekend clinic because of concerns for possible coronavirus, please contact us first so we can arrange proper assessment and minimize the risk of exposing others in the office.