MAPHCO MESSAGE

Social Distancing Still Applies When You’re Outside

Despite the fact that there was a dusting of snow on the ground Thursday morning, warmer weather is coming. That hope, along with the element that we’ve all been cooped up for the last six weeks, will likely cause residents to take to the trails and parks to get some fresh air and sunshine. That doesn’t mean that social distancing doesn’t still apply.

During an interview on WBUR recently, Dr. Richard Serrao, an infectious disease physician with the VA Boston Healthcare System and clinical associate professor at the Boston University School of Medicine stated that “scientists don’t know yet how transmissible the coronavirus is in open air.” (Serrao, 2020) The doctor suggests maintaining more than a 6 foot distance when engaging in an activity of higher intensity, because droplets from your mouth or nose travel with greater velocity when you’re moving quickly. If you are following someone running ahead of you, stay a little off to the side of them, rather than directly behind (downstream of) them. Dr. Ellen Foxman, assistant professor at Yale School of Medicine, says “even if you’re walking or running, wearing a bandana or something like that is sort of a polite thing for others more than for yourself.” (Foxman, 2020)

Most, if not all, Franklin County towns have closed parks and playgrounds. According to Dr. Serrao, the most important piece of play structure safety is the proximity of children to each other and what can be transmitted through touch.

So bottom line, being outside is safer than being in an enclosed environment with stagnant air, but we still need to be vigilant about social distancing practices.

Buoy, 211, and Community Resource Line

There are two online resources local boards of health should know about. The first is Buoy, which is a Coronavirus prevention and treatment website. The site walks you through a set of questions about your symptoms and helps you determine if you should seek medical attention or testing. For more information, visit www.buoyhealth.com.

The second is Mass211. According to their website, “the Massachusetts 211 system is a call center that connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community.” Mass211 is happy to receive information from local communities to enhance their database so they have accurate and up to date information to give to callers. This is a good number to give to residents to find out about what services your town is providing during COVID-19 and saves you the step of setting up and staffing your own hotline. For more information, visit www.mass211.org.

If you prefer a more local approach to 211, the Greenfield emergency operations center is staffing a community resource line M – F 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., available to all residents in Franklin County. You can refer callers to 413-775-6411.

Helping Businesses through COVID-19

As we’ve all seen on the news, our small businesses are struggling to survive during this crisis. Some that are allowed to operate may be afraid to, or don’t know how to institute precautions to make sure their employees remain safe on the job. They may be nervous about reaching out to their local board of
health for fear of admonishment. Local boards of health are encouraged to reach out to businesses and offer advice and assistance. Perhaps they have a protocol you could review for them or perhaps they need a protocol that you could help them write. Perhaps they need to know how to access PPE. Perhaps one of their employees is showing symptoms and they don’t know what to do. A friendly phone call from their board of health may be just the help they need.