

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING DURING COVID-19
An Interview with Pinehurst Medical Clinic's Pulmonologist, Dr. Michael Pritchett

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

Pinehurst Medical Clinic's pulmonologist, Dr. Michael Pritchett, provided the following information, "COVID-19 is caused primarily by respiratory droplets that come out of an infected person's mouth when they cough, breathe, sneeze or talk."

The droplets have been shown to travel up to 6 feet, and most droplets end up falling onto the ground or any surface within 6 feet. These droplets can contain live virus particles for many hours, or even days, depending on the surface they land, which is why frequently disinfecting surfaces is so important. Dr. Pritchett, stated, "People often become infected after touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their face, which is when the virus can infect them via contact with their mucus membranes (nose, mouth, eyes)."

WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

The CDC provides the following definition:

Social distancing also called "physical distancing," means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

In addition to [everyday steps to prevent COVID-19](#), keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread locally and across the country and world.

Many healthcare providers recommend minimizing your trips out for medicine, groceries, and all other essential items.

WHY IS SOCIAL DISTANCING IMPORTANT?

Dr. Pritchett stated, "Social Distancing is critical, as it is impossible to catch the virus if you stay home and do not come into contact with anyone that has the virus. Pritchett says, "This is the main reason we want everyone to stay home, as we know it will have the most significant impact on keeping people safe and getting us back to normal, as soon as possible."

Pritchett went further by saying, "If you go to the store, wear a mask, take hand sanitizer and use it after you touch things. Please do not wear gloves, as you can become infected from the gloves as easily as from your hands. Gloves tend to offer a false of security. If someone in your house has to go to the grocery store, try to only send one designated person (the same person) each time. This helps to minimize the number of people who

are put at risk for getting the infection. When you do go to the grocery store...keep your distance from others."

For additional information, review the tips shared by Pinehurst Medical Clinic's Wellness Team via PMC's website at www.pinehurstmedical.com, as well as PMC's Facebook page.

WHY SHOULD YOU WEAR A FACEMASK?

Considering, the primary way to get COVID-19 is via droplet; everyone is now recommended to wear a mask when they are out in public. Dr. Pritchett provided a few reasons for this, "The first is that even if you're not having symptoms, you could be infected and that can spread to others by the droplet method as mentioned above. (Yes that's right, it's estimated that 20% of people with COVID-19 may have no symptoms while still being able to infect others). Wearing a mask helps to minimize spread of infected droplets from your mouth/nose. This strategy works best if EVERYONE wears a mask when they are out...even if you feel fine." Dr. Pritchett also states, "Another great reason to wear a mask is to remind yourself not to touch your face."

WHAT ARE OTHER WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED?

Use technology such as FaceTime to share moments with loved ones or call and talk to your friends and family members.

Social distancing does mean you must remain indoors. Remember to get outside, enjoying the weather by sitting on your front porch, or stay active by going for a walk or bike ride.

Keeping in mind that all of these measures are only temporary in the grand scheme.

PMC's Wellness Department has provided tips for surviving quarantine, which can be found on PMC's website at www.pinehurstmedical.com or PMC's Facebook page.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU FEEL SICK?

Dr. Pritchett's recommends, "If at any time you start to feel ill, stay home! There are a variety of symptoms that go with COVID-19 infection, and some are as simple as "not feeling well," being tired or achy."

Dr. Pritchett states, "Other symptoms are cough, shortness of breath and fever; however, not all people have a fever. Some individuals can even have other symptoms like loss of taste/smell, diarrhea, or vague abdominal pain."

If you have these symptoms, call before arriving at your doctor's or the Emergency Department.

HOW DOES PINEHURST MEDICAL CLINIC PROVIDE HEALTHCARE CONSIDERING SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Pinehurst Medical Clinic is offering numerous platforms to allow patients to connect with a PMC provider remotely.

Patients have access to PMC providers through multiple video visit platforms. PMC is also offering a telemedicine support line at (910)235-5885 to assist patients who need help navigating video visits.

Additional information regarding all of the resources available can be found on PMC's website at www.pinehurstmedical.com.

PMC also opened a Virtual Care Clinic at the Heather Glen Campus located at 15 Regional Drive in Pinehurst. The Virtual Care Clinic allows patients access from the comfort of their vehicle:

- Assisted Video Visits with PMC Providers
- Provider Ordered Laboratory Tests
- Curbside Pharmacy Pick-Up

The Virtual Care Clinic is open Monday – Friday by appointment. To schedule an appointment call (910) 235-5886 today.