

MEDICAL OFFICER UPDATE
TAL DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
June 26, 2020

As we move into Phase 4 of our Governors planned revitalization from COVID-19, several Legion Family members have asked the same questions so we thought it would be beneficial to address them here.

What will Phase 4 look like: Basically Phase 4 will look a lot like phase 3, except with more businesses open and more people gathering. Phase 4 limits gatherings up to 50 people, assuming everyone practices their social distancing and wears a mask or face covering. Child Care, Summer Camps and even Theaters and the Cinema can open following appropriate guidelines. Health Clubs, Retail Shops and everything that was classified as “nonessential” can open. In short, it is a midway point between what we have now and being back to our normal.

Personal Protective Equipment/PPE and Skin Irritation: Usually this is a result of frequent hand washing and the use of PPE, which can cause skin breakdown and different types of skin conditions like; pressure injuries, eczema, infections and dermatitis. These are usually seen on the bridge of the nose, cheeks, foreheads and hands. You might notice some redness, itching burning or bumps.

Generally, you want the skin kept clean and well hydrated, and rest it when you can. Keep your showers/baths/hand washing short with luke warm water and mild soap. Use gloves when using cleaning or disinfecting products or washing the dishes. Frequent hand washing, sanitizing or long term glove use can lead to a moisture imbalance. Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer unless the hands are visibly dirty. Hand sanitizers are less irritating than soap, and soap will strip away the natural skin oils. Instead of rubbing your hands dry, let them air dry or pat them dry. Apply moisturizer regularly whenever the skin feels dry. Try to stick with creams and ointments and avoid lotions, as lotions are less moisturizing. For other skin conditions you might need a barrier cream, topical steroid or antibiotic/antifungal treatment; some of which are over the counter and others are by prescription, so check with your pharmacist or primary care.

COVID Treatment: Everyone is anxious for a treatment and while anecdotal and observational data makes the headlines it is often before any peer review.

Current COVID-19 treatments are a consideration for hospital inpatients only and not currently used for outpatients or preventative care. No treatments are FDA approved at this time, and no vaccine is currently available.

So What Can We Do: As our state opens up venues after months of quarantine, we all are eager to get out and get back to our more regular activities. Our policy makers are waiting for a medication that can effectively and consistently “cure” COVID-19, or a vaccine, before we really get back to normal life. However, there is rarely a cure for viral infections, which is why we so heavily rely on vaccines.

So what is the solution? The solution is having a healthy immune system. If you have a strong immune system then your body will be better equipped in combating the COVID-19 virus, and you will be more likely to be one of those who has an asymptomatic exposure or mild illness. I have seen this already with already with individuals who have a higher baseline of inflammation as they are more likely to have a more severe response to the virus. We know that people with heart disease, diabetes and are overweight are at a higher risk.

Approximately 70% of our immune system is tied into the gut. To improve your immune system and lower inflammation, start with your gut. Eat a healthy well balanced diet with several servings of vegetables and fruit while limiting processed foods or the drive the through sack. Chewing your food slowly improves digestion, absorption and limits gas. Stay hydrated with water and lower your stress. Find a way to relax and enjoy life’s blessings. Chat with your primary care on other options, which might be right for your individual needs.

As we move forward, we must remember we are not in this alone. Sometimes it is easy to put a phone call aside or a text message, especially as we start to venture out more, but we are our **Brothers Keeper!** Our **Buddy Checks** have worked and have had a positive response from our grass root level in our Posts up the chain to National. Your persistence, your love and your support for our **Brothers & Sisters** rings through loud and clear. Please don’t slow down now, but continue to engage.

Be Strong, Be Safe and Reach Out.

Don