

March 18, 2020

Dear fellow citizens of Lampasas,

This is Dr. Georgia Hay, and I am writing this to help provide information about COVID-19 which is the disease caused by a new coronavirus, SARS-CoV2, that continues to spread to many areas including Austin. I am the local public health authority for Lampasas County. I believe education is key to help contain and slow the spread of this disease. I also think this will help those who might be struggling with panic and anxiety over the pandemic while realizing the seriousness and gravity of the situation. This is a virus, which means we don't have a cure for it and can only provide supportive care for the lung problems it causes.

It is much worse than "the flu" which is caused by a different virus that does affect a lot of people, but since we have all been exposed in the past, it affects each of us differently. It also is spread over a longer time which doesn't overwhelm our ER and hospital since the typical flu season lasts 6 months. The new coronavirus is very contagious, spread when people cough or sneeze, and from the virus staying on surfaces. It also can be spread even when symptoms are mild. Most people will likely get symptoms within 6 days of contact with another individual, but it can be anywhere from 2-14 days. It is very contagious and for those over 60 years old and those with hypertension, diabetes, lung disease and on immunosuppressive drugs for cancer or autoimmune disease there is a greater chance of respiratory problems and death. As we age, the risk and death rate go up. For those over 80, it kills 15 in every 100 infected. For those 70-79, it kills 8 out of 100 people. The overall death rate for the flu is 0.07% and the coronavirus is 4%.

Due to the elevated risk for our friends and family members in that age group it becomes our responsibility to help slow down the spread of this disease. We want our hospitals and emergency rooms to be able to care for those with severe breathing problems related to COVID-19 and be there for true unrelated emergencies. There are some things we can do. Limit gatherings to 10 or less. Use drive thru functions. Avoid any unnecessary outings and travel. Wash our hands well with soap and water. Keep children at home since they often are carriers of this disease with little or no symptoms. If you start to feel sick with cough and fever, stay or go home, and call your doctor's office first for further instruction. Please do not show up unannounced as that may infect many more people who are also seeking care for unrelated illnesses. Mild symptoms can be cared for at home.

I understand this causes inconvenience in our lives. I too am a working single mother with two children affected by school closures. I would like to thank you in advance for your understanding in these matters, as would all the medical providers in our area and all our citizens in the at-risk age group. Stay well.