



**MEDIA RELEASE
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**St. Clair County Health Department-Opinion Editorial
Contact Tracing: Compliance is Key in Controlling Community Transmission of COVID-19**

We are all tired of COVID-19, however, the virus is not tired of us! As this pandemic drags on we have to congratulate ourselves for suppressing the first surge in March and April, though we are learning it isn't over. The virus wasn't laying "dormant" these past few weeks. It was still circulating at a lower rate because it didn't have as many people to work with due to the Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order. Now that we are out and about more, the opportunity for this germ to invade, replicate, and transmit is much greater. In our region we are seeing a gradual increase in cases and percentage of positive tests. The majority of cases (75%) are linked to other known cases or working in health care, yet over 9% of the cases have come from people traveling (even within MI). This means that more than 15% have no known "link" to an identified case indicating we have community transmission. Our best chances of avoiding infection are to wear a mask (or face covering) and stay at least 6 feet away from other people.

A key strategy in controlling community transmission is by identifying case "contacts". It is imperative we communicate with each case to find out who was exposed to them in order to "shut down" further transmission. This process is called "contact tracing". How does it work? St. Clair County Health Department Nursing staff calls each individual with a positive test. If/when that person answers the phone or returns our call (please do!), instructions are provided on infection management and isolation. Additionally, questions are asked regarding places visited and about others whom they had close contact with now considered at high risk of exposure. Those people are then notified on what to watch for and how best not to spread the virus (or germs) themselves. If everyone does what is asked, the chain of transmission is broken and the virus is slowed. If even one person fails to comply transmission can continue. If enough people don't comply it accelerates. This process is not an invasion of your privacy but rather a critical tool to save us all from worsening conditions. IT ONLY TAKES ONE PERSON TO CHANGE THE WHOLE DISEASE PATTERN IN OUR COMMUNITY! We know it may feel uncomfortable sharing these details, however we are 100% committed to protecting your personal health information. No personal information will ever be shared. The overall health and wellbeing of our residents is of critical importance. The main goal is to reduce community disease transmission and slow down the spread in our county.

We are tired of wearing masks, avoiding crowds, washing our hands often and even hearing about COVID-19, nevertheless the virus is not tired of us. Wishing it would go away or believing it is not a big deal will not make it disappear. Please do the right thing for your health, our economy and for our community.

Yours in Health,

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