



**MEDIA RELEASE
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**St. Clair County Health Department-Opinion Editorial
A Golden Opportunity**

This is a “Golden Opportunity”. If you follow the national COVID-19 data, different areas of the country are having different experiences with the virus. Some are seeing sharp increases in cases, while others are not. Even within Michigan, there are regions and counties that have very different situations. The MI Safe Start Map <https://www.mistartmap.info/> provides useful insights into “Official Risk Levels” related to COVID-19 infections by region. Another site that gives a national view (down to the county level) of similar data is the Harvard Global Health Institute’s “COVID Risk Levels Dashboard” <https://globalhealth.harvard.edu/>.

One of things you can do with this information is make smart choices about where to travel. The reality is pretty simple. The more people you come in contact with who have the virus, the greater your chances of getting it yourself and then spreading it on. It is pretty evident that the density of a population (how many people live within a certain area) plays a big role in transmission. In very sparsely populated states and counties there tends to be lower rates. This doesn’t mean that people are immune in these areas, it just means they are less likely to be close enough to each other to spread the virus. SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) cannot move on its own – it requires transportation on a respiratory droplet – which cannot go very far on its own either. Remember it is not “over there”, it’s only a breath away.

The other factor that is evident from these dashboards is that daily average cases (over a seven day period) can give a very clear picture of community transmission. This is concerning when it goes up because it may indicate that the virus is spreading beyond a rate that can be managed. It is the earliest and best indicator if we are moving in the “right” or “wrong” direction because if we wait for hospitalizations or deaths to rise, we have lost our “window of opportunity” (note my previous contact tracing Op-Ed). This is our “Golden Opportunity”; a good chance to get something valuable or be very successful. A chance that should not be missed. Maintaining the economic and social structure of our country is pretty darn important and this pandemic is a real threat to our current way of life. Taking this time to strengthen and enhance our tools of defense needs to be taken now. There are only a few we currently have (you all know them); hand washing, social distancing and face masks. We can debate all summer about how well each one works. We know they work to some degree and if used together by the majority of people, they work really well. However, the longer we debate and argue, the more time we lose. This virus will take every second, every opportunity to enhance its survival. Why don’t we do the same? Do not waste this precious time, we have no time to waste.

Yours in Health,

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