

Gearing up for the "New" Normal

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has added six new symptoms for novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In addition to fever, cough, and shortness of breath, the CDC has now added more defined symptoms related to having a fever including chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, and headache. Additionally, medical providers are also checking whether a person has a sore throat or new loss of taste or smell.

"They're recognizing that to be one of the more telltale signs, so if you have it more than likely you have COVID. It's not that everyone who has COVID has it, but if you do have a sudden loss of taste or a sudden loss of smell more than likely the real reason is you have COVID"

Lori Grooms, the director of prevention control for OSF HealthCare, acknowledges a sore throat can mean a variety of things, particularly at this time of the year when seasonal allergies start for some. That's why it's important to make sure something like a sore throat can't be traced to another cause.

Tracking these expanded symptoms will be important as medical facilities, including the 14 hospitals operated by OSF HealthCare, look to start safely bringing medical procedures that had been paused by the COVID-19 pandemic back online.

"Source control is what we're doing to actually get ourselves ready to open up to bring other patients in, so bringing in your elective surgeries and things like that. We're moving toward source control and one of the key steps in source control is making sure everyone is masked as well as making sure that everyone monitoring for symptoms. So we're going to move towards a more active monitoring of that."

Grooms expects additional symptom tracking and requiring the wearing of face masks in public areas to be our new normal for the foreseeable future. As the economy and local businesses reopen, she urges everyone to do what's best for themselves. She says a cautious approach may be the best.

"As we begin to open up restaurants, as we begin to open up movie theaters, golf courses, we really need to make a judgment for ourselves. Just because it's open doesn't mean you need to go there. Also continuing to keep your groups to smaller groups - 10 or fewer- maintaining spatial distancing. Just because I can go to a restaurant with a group of ten people doesn't mean that that's personally right for me especially if I have multiple medical conditions or I've been not feeling well myself."

"I think that we may see a second wave – that wave may not come until the fall, but I think we need to be prepared for it to be an extended period of time. After it's all over I'm hoping that we can go back to a new normal where we are more conscious about our hand hygiene, staying home when we're ill."

For more information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19), including frequently asked questions, please visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and it is not an emergency, use one of the digital care options offered by OSF. You can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF website, or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).