

CEDAR SPRINGS COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Questions and Answers for our Members Issue II on April 10, 2020

Dear Springers!

We wish you a HAPPY, SAFE and mostly VIRTUAL HOLIDAY WEEKEND!

Caring for your family and friends right now means keeping them at a distance!

Today, we are asking:

Question: What should I do to prevent infection via contaminated surfaces?

A few facts:

- The main risk of infection is through direct close contact with other people even if they appear perfectly well. Hence the crucial importance of social distancing.
- Indirect infection from touching contaminated surfaces is less likely but cannot be ruled out.
- It has been widely reported that this virus (called SARS-CoV-2) survives up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel; up to 24 hours on cardboard; and up to 4 hours on copper. PLEASE take these data with a grain of salt: The tests have been done with strict control of temperature (21 to 23°C) and humidity (40%). The results may not apply under different environmental conditions. Importantly, the amount of virus on the various surfaces decreased steadily over the stated time frames.

(Link to scientific article under "Further Reading")

Answer: We recommend the following strategy to keep you and your family safe:

- Avoid touching ANY surfaces ANYWHERE outside of your own home and yard.
- Teach your children to do the same. If they are too young to comprehend, they require CONSTANT supervision by a responsible adult.
- If you cannot avoid touching surfaces that may be contaminated, your best 2 strategies remain: (1) PROMPT handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer with high alcohol content; (2) NOT touching your face while your hands are potentially contaminated. Gloves in our daily lives are less important and may actually increase the risk of contamination if not used properly (see below):

- Avoid eating anything with your hands unless you have washed your hands immediately before your meal or snack.

- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly with clean water as you would have done before this pandemic. Experts typically do not advise wiping down cartons or washing food with chemicals etc.

Tip: For extra peace of mind, Barbara and Haresh leave bags with non-perishable items for a couple of days in the hallway before emptying them. We then bring the items into the kitchen but not the bags.

- Clean frequently used surfaces in your home regularly with soap and water. Cleaning with disinfectant is only appropriate for hospitals and similar settings.

- Don't forget to clean your smartphone(s) and keyboards.

- A final word about gloves: Health professionals are taught to take them off safely without contaminating their skin in the process. If gloves are not removed properly, they may actually increase the risk for the wearer.

**Further
Reading:**

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

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If you are interested in the – limited – scientific evidence on this topic: You can download this recent publication as a PDF free of charge.

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