



April 6, 2020

Dear Patients, Friends & Neighbours,

We are coming up on a month since our first email update went out; a month since our office, our community, and in fact our entire world has changed. As expressed in our last letter, the coming days will likely be telling with respect to how hard our hospitals and our communities will be hit-- as well as how successful we've been at reducing the spread of the virus.

At Generations, we have heard kind and supportive words from many of you, and we sincerely appreciate them. We can only reciprocate by expressing how proud we are of so many in our community-- not just those on the front lines, whether providing health care or essential services, but also all of us who continue to make significant sacrifices in order to give ourselves the best protection possible. **Keep up the good work!!!**

New information on Ontario's response to COVID-19 continues to be made constantly available, and we encourage you to remain updated via many of the links we have previously shared, as well as any other appropriate sources. That said, we all need to remind ourselves occasionally that it's not necessary to immediately digest every single tweet or news release on the pandemic-- information overload is no doubt starting to affect all of us, if indeed it hasn't already. Suffice to say, the primary piece of information that bears repeating has not changed: **STAY HOME!** The more we keep up social and physical distancing, whenever and wherever possible, the better chance we've got of flattening the curve and avoiding a larger surge.

HOLIDAYS

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our patients celebrating Passover, Easter, and/or Ramadan in the coming days and weeks nothing but happy, healthy, and meaningful holidays. **However, we also would like to remind all of our patients to avoid any social gatherings beyond those in your immediate household.** As difficult as it may be to remain apart from family and loved ones during these times of year when we are most used to gathering together, it remains critical that we keep social distancing restrictions in place, particularly to protect the most vulnerable among us. The coronavirus will not make exceptions for one or two nights; neither should we.

MEDICAL CARE IN OFFICE

- **Office/Phone Hours** - effective this week:
 - Mon, Tues, Thurs: 9:00 - 15:00
 - Wed, Fri: 9:00 - 12:00
- If/when you do need to come into the office, **please consider wearing a mask** if you have one available to you.
- Once again, we are attempting to limit the number of people in our office at any given time in order to limit everyone's exposure. This includes our physicians, as

Dr. Sheana E. Desson
Dr. Kimberly Reiter
Dr. Jodine L. Rosenberg
Dr. Brian N. Silver
Dr. David M. Silver

Generations Family Health Centre
104 – 272 Lawrence Ave. W.
Toronto, ON M5M-4M1
ph: 416.847.9999 / fax: 416.847-8999
generations.ourmd.ca



- all of us will be working from home at times. (If you are expecting a call, don't forget that we might phone from a blocked/private or "unknown" number.)
- Regardless of whether your family doctor is physically in the office at any given time, phone messages to the office will be relayed to them. Of course, you can always reach your family doctor by DSG Secure Email as well. (Please register for Secure Email if you haven't already!: <http://dsgsecure.com>)
 - **We continue to cancel previously scheduled non-urgent or "routine" visits, such as Periodic Health Assessments/General Check-ups.** At this point, we are canceling such appointments through to the end of April. If you have concerns you had hoped to discuss at your check-up, please do reach out to your family doctor; it may be appropriate to transition to a virtual visit in the interim.
 - **Shots/Immunizations:** Some shots are time-sensitive and will require patients to come into the office-- but others can safely be delayed. These include:
 - o *Shingles*: 2nd dose is still effective if given 1 year after the first dose
 - o *Tetanus*: boosters can likely be delayed
 - o *Pertussis* (Whooping Cough): in pregnant patients - important to receive immunization after 27 weeks gestation
 - o *Vitamin B12*: can likely be delayed in most cases
 - o *Prolia*: can likely be delayed for 1-2 months (check with your doctor first)

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

This is a difficult subject to bring up at the best of times, but it is an extremely important one. Under "normal" circumstances in the past, we have discussed Advance Care Planning (ACP) and "goals of care" with many of you in our office, in order to help ensure that should the time come when you require more advanced or invasive levels of medical care, your wishes for your own care will be respected.

We cannot escape the fact that COVID-19 is upon us. While we will hope -- and fight -- for the best, it is also still incumbent upon us to prepare for the worst. We bring this up now NOT to incite fear or panic-- but rather to emphasize the importance of clear-headed preparation. Specifically, now is the time to consider what type of care you would like to receive in the event that you became seriously ill — with COVID-19 or otherwise — and to discuss these wishes with those who you expect will make decisions on your behalf if you are no longer capable of doing so yourself.

If you would like to give the topic some consideration, we would encourage you to watch this video prepared by colleagues in Ontario:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoPDbMFZ7k4&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1K0dfBr0aRb2PgVyuKRj1TOaSq2SUx_7Revl3r4nwlCBCFFOeqtiB1L7s

Likewise, the website *Speak Up Canada* provides is an excellent resource to help to think about ACP in general, as well as some specific information on COVID-19 in particular:

<https://www.advancecareplanning.ca/covid19/>

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MENTAL HEALTH

We have previously posted some options for some local psychotherapists providing care virtually during COVID-19. Below please find a selection of web-based resources that might also prove helpful for anyone who feels their mental health could use a boost right now:

- **Improving Mental Health During COVID-19** - website created by a psychiatrist at North York General Hospital
<https://mentalhealthcovid19.ca/>
- **Bounceback** - free skill-building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry
<https://bouncebackontario.ca/>
- **Headspace** - meditation website & app - offering some services free during COVID-19
<https://www.headspace.com/>
- **Mood Gym** - like an interactive self-help book - helps you to learn and practice skills which can help to prevent and manage symptoms of depression and anxiety
<https://moodgym.com.au/>
- **Free Mindfulness Project** - free guide to relaxation and mindfulness exercises
<http://www.freemindfulness.org>

These are tough times for everybody-- but let's also not lose sight of the fact that Spring is still in the air too! We will get through this together!

Be well and stay safe,

Generations FHC staff

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