

Northampton Area Pediatrics – Message to Teens

3.17.2020

Teenagers,

What you do right now matters, and we want you to understand why. This is what you should know about COVID-19:

- It's new. This strain of coronavirus, which causes a cold that can lead to pneumonia, didn't exist before this winter. This is important because it means **no one is immune**.
- It's **very contagious**. It spreads like the common cold, or worse. It lives in snot and spit. It lives on metal or plastic surfaces (your phone case? Public railings?) for DAYS.
- It's deadly. About 1 in 100 of all people who get it die.
- There is a possible chance you will get this disease.
- Fortunately, **you'll probably be fine**. When you catch it, you might not even notice. Most people with coronavirus don't get super sick. In fact, some people, especially young people, get infected and don't feel a thing.
- **But**, when you catch coronavirus, **it uses you** to reproduce. The virus turns your nose into a virus-making machine, so you'll spread it **without even knowing it**.
- **This isn't about you**. This is mostly about older people. Your grandma, your friend's grandma, the nice lady at the coffee shop that makes your chai. It's also about people with things like asthma, high blood pressure, or diabetes. When these folks get coronavirus, it's much more likely to turn into severe pneumonia. The infection goes to their lungs, and then gets worse until they can't breathe.
- **Hospitals can help** many of those people. But **hospitals can't help** if everyone gets sick at once. There literally isn't enough room. And there aren't enough beds, nurses, masks, tests, medicine, ventilators, or oxygen tanks to go around.
- This disease took the world by surprise. Medical experts need time to figure out the best ways to treat this.
- **This is how you help**: Slow it down. Stay away from people. Don't go places where germs hang out. Don't touch things. Don't touch people. Don't let it use you! Literally, stay in your house. **Don't become a walking virus reproduction center.**

Staying home won't stop the virus (because you're going to have to go out eventually), but if we slow it down, we can catch up. Do your part, buy the world some time. Do that and save lives.