Remaining Steadfast Against COVID-19

Members of the public can help reverse a recent uptick in cases of COVID-19 locally by following common-sense safety measures, according to county health officials and leaders from local healthcare organizations.

Health experts said it’s critical for all residents to help curb community spread by wearing masks in public places, by staying six feet apart from others whenever possible and by washing their hands frequently and thoroughly.

“These practices are critical now more than ever,” said Gail O’Neill, director of the Sangamon Department of Public Health. “We have started to see an uptick in cases locally, and disregarding masking guidelines and social distancing standards is certainly contributing to the rise.”

Face coverings may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others through respiratory droplets. To be effective, a face covering or mask should cover the person’s nose and mouth, and should fit closely to their face.

“As health care leaders, we are committed to keeping our patients, employees, and communities safe. This includes everyone wearing a mask in our clinics and on our campuses. We also know that individual choices in our communities are a major factor in the success of our fight against coronavirus and the pandemic,” said Harry Lausen, DO, SIU Medicine’s chief medical officer. “SIU Medicine joins our community partners to strongly encourage the wearing of masks in community and group settings.”

Anyone who cannot wear a mask for health reasons should avoid public places if possible, as their condition would put them at greater risk for serious complications if they contract COVID-19, the organizations said.
The organizations also noted that other states have seen surges in cases that have strained medical resources, and forced closings of businesses that had re-opened. While hospitalizations have not risen as sharply in central Illinois as in other states, the health organizations said it’s critical to continue to follow health guidelines to reduce the spread of the virus.

“We wholeheartedly support our local business owners who are making difficult choices about how to keep their businesses open and keep employees and patrons safe,” stated Springfield Clinic's chief medical officer, Ken Sagins, MD, FAAP. "Following public health guidelines is the best way for the public to support local businesses and to help all of us return to normalcy.”

“We understand people are worried, but healthcare facilities are some of the safest places you can be right now. We have teams dedicated to quality and cleanliness at all our facilities. Protecting your health and safety is our top priority,” said Gurpreet Mander, MD, HSHS Illinois chief physician executive. “We’re ready to take care of all your health care needs; and encourage you to not delay your care.”

The health leaders emphasized that taking precautions is a community issue.

“We don’t know when this crisis will be over. But, we do know that our community is strongest when we work together,” said Raj Govindaiah, MD, chief medical officer for Memorial Health System. “Everyone must do their part to protect themselves and each other, and that will help to ensure that Springfield weathers the next phase of this crisis.”