

# BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Watchung Residents: March 25, 2020

We are very fortunate to have access to experts in our Borough from whom we are able to obtain information to advise residents on measures that may help them stay safe and healthy, and who can factually inform us on matters involving COVID -19. The following information addresses the COVID-19 outbreak and questions many individuals may have.

First and foremost, we encourage all borough residents to follow the directives of federal, state and county officials and to obtain up-to-date COVID-19 information from:

CDC's website; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>;  
New Jersey DOH website: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>;  
Somerset County health department website:  
<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-health-safety/health-department/services/disease-prevention/novel-coronavirus-2019-2641>

*Why are the numbers of infected COVID-19 individuals increasing so rapidly?*

The increased rate of testing is having the intended effect: identifying individuals with respiratory illness who have contracted COVID-19. It is important to identify these individuals so they can isolate themselves and so that other household members who have been in close contact with them can restrict their movement too. The combined impact of new tests, commercial labs processing the tests, and the greater availability of tests has led to an increased number of individuals tested and consequently, a larger number of COVID-19-positive individuals being reported.

*But if we are all self-quarantining, does this mean it's not working?*

No, the increase is due to expanded testing and, in fact, strongly supports the necessity of social distancing and sheltering in place measures.

*When will we see that the current controls are working?*

That is difficult to predict. The measures currently in place should continue: stay isolated as much as possible; wash hands frequently and refrain from touching one's face; test suspected individuals; and quarantine those who test positive away from other family members. Health officials are monitoring daily the number of infected individuals and it is expected that several weeks will elapse before we will see any positive effects of current strategies.

*How will we know when the pandemic is under control?*

With expanded testing, reported levels of those infected will likely continue to increase for the near term. The current social distancing strategies for all individuals has to be strictly maintained. Those who test positive need to be in true isolation AND those cohabitating are advised to do the same. If we all adhere to these policies, we expect the rise in COVID-19-positive individuals to level off first. Then the number should begin to drop. The exact times are dependent upon many factors and may not occur for several weeks or even months.

*Isolation is hard, and I have items I need for my house. How do I get these if I am in a household where someone is sick?*

If you are in that situation, it is best to have someone from outside the home deliver food, medicine, and other necessary items for at least two weeks. The town can provide assistance to any individuals who have a concern. Please call the helpline at 908-745-2111, from 7am – 7pm. In a medical or other emergency, call 911 and let the dispatcher know if the individual requiring assistance is COVID-19-positive or suspected positive so the dispatcher can ensure protection for those involved in the transport and medical care.

*I know I'm older and in a high-risk group, but I don't want to be a bother to anyone.*

Be a bother! Please think of yourself AND all others. We need to decrease all infections, but if you are high risk PLEASE stay as isolated as possible and use the helpline identified in the question above. Please observe and practice the safety measures to protect yourself as well as others. If you are

not sure what to do, check online or call us. This is why we are here — to help!