



**Foundation for a
Healthy St. Petersburg**



**CENTER FOR
HEALTH EQUITY**

Frequently Asked Health-Related Questions at the April 21, 2020 COVID-19

Virtual Town Hall

Q: When will large scale events again be possible?

A: Florida residents are currently under a stay at home order. It is difficult to predict when large events, particularly for at-risk groups such as seniors, might be safe. After the new infections rate plateaus and begins to decline, there will be limited, staged reopenings of businesses, however large events are not possible for the foreseeable future

Q: Should employees and students be tested for COVID-19 before returning to work or school?

A: Ideally, yes. However, the lack of available widespread testing is likely to be the obstacle. Child care availability will also pose a challenge for working parents when their businesses reopen.

Q: What are the recommendations about wearing masks?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends all persons wear cloth masks in public.

Q: Will the data become available to show whether those who have died from COVID-19 died in a hospital or in their home? And whether they had underlying health conditions?

A: Scientists are researching the higher than normal death rates in March and early April that were not attributed to COVID-19. In any pandemic, high death rates are a place to begin understanding the full impact of the disease, but no answers at this time. Deaths due to COVID-19 at home and at nursing homes are also believed to be underestimated.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2020/04/27/covid-19-death-toll-undercounted/?arc404=true>

Q: What is the impact - financially, academically as well as emotionally/psychologically - of this crisis on public school students and college students.

A: School closings on this scale are unprecedented and according to experts, we're in uncharted territory academically. What we can say is that existing gaps in learning opportunities by race and income are going to be exacerbated. There are numerous projects by the school district in Pinellas County to increase digital access for all children and families during this time of remote learning. The Foundation and the Pinellas Education Foundation purchased and distributed more than 600 mobile hotspots for families without internet service last month. Reading resource:

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/04/the-pandemics-impact-on-education/>

The interruption of college study has many unfortunately implications, including the challenges of inequitable virtual learning environments, as outlined in this [New York Times story](#).

Q: People don't seem to be practicing social distancing. What can I do to spread the word?

A: Please share this video about social distancing, developed by the Foundation with the Department of Health. <https://vimeo.com/402720092>

Q: What is being done to address the challenges of the homeless population, both for their own sake and for the challenges they pose for public health?

A: The Florida Homeless Leadership Alliance offers advice and resources to help keep staff and homeless clients safe during the COVID-19 pandemic on [their website](#). Pinellas County government is housing homeless people with symptoms in a Clearwater hotel. The Foundation is standing by to support an expansion of those efforts at the direction and request of the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County.

Q: How can we get masks and gloves to high risk communities? How do we make our own masks?

A: Many organizations, including the [St. Petersburg Free Clinic](#) are accepting donations of homemade masks and distributing them to people in need throughout the county. The City of Pinellas Park will give away 20,000 masks to business owners and employees between May 4 and 8.

There are many different instructions for making masks on YouTube and the internet. Here are [sew and no-sew instructions](#) from the CDC's website.

Q: What are we learning about immunity in those who have experienced the disease?

A: Consensus seems to be that the virus is too new to have a definitive answer about immunity post-COVID. Initial studies indicate that as with most viruses, the body retains a memory of the disease and produces antibodies. However in some cases, patients continue to react to the disease antibodies with an intense and dangerous ongoing inflammatory response. In short, there is a long way to go with both virus and antibody testing, according to a May 7th post in the [NIH Director's Blog](#). "But as this study and others begin to piece together the complex puzzle of antibody-mediated immunity, it will be possible to learn more about the human body's response to SARS-CoV-2 and home in on our goal of achieving safe, effective, and sustained protection against this devastating disease."

Q: Do we anticipate seeing COVID-19 in the fall, along with influenza?

A: Yes. [CDC experts](#) are warning of this double challenge.

Q: What lessons from the early HIV epidemic are applicable to COVID-19?

This [blog from the Journal Health Affairs](#) draws upon lessons learned in the early years of the HIV/AIDS crisis about the important of [contact tracing](#) to halt the spread of disease.

Q: Hopefully, this experience will help reverse the trend of ever greater cuts to the public health infrastructure. How do we better prepare for future public health challenges?

Public health experts are putting together blueprints of how we can do better as a nation to create a public health infrastructure and health care system that will better serve Americans. Decades of budget cuts and a general ideological devaluation of the role of government and career expertise at the county, state and federal level have surely all take their toll and must be reversed. Here is a [thorough diagnosis](#) of the problems we face currently in the United States, relative to a number of other countries benchmarked.

Q: These disasters—Katrina, the AIDS crisis, and others—always disproportionately impact people of color and those living in poverty. How can we use this lesson to ensure the gaps are closed moving forward.

A: The Foundation and partners are gathering lots of good research, data and editorials about ideas for using the COVID crisis as a once-and-for-all wake up call to close the equity gaps in our communities, nationally and locally.

Here is a particularly comprehensive diagnosis of the equity implications of crises such as this:

[Ten Equity Implications of the Coronavirus COVID-19 Outbreak in the United States, NAACP](#)

Here are some bloggers who present a strong vision for a more equitable path forward:

<https://www.livingcities.org/blog/1426-covid-19-difficult-truths-and-the-urgency-of-closing-racial-gaps>

<https://www.livingcities.org/blog/1416-an-invitation-to-center-race-in-government-responses-to-covid-19>

[Editorial by Andre Perry and Nathalie Molina Nino in the Boston Globe](#) “Planning for a post-coronavirus economy must focus on racial inequities”