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Driving successful outcomes in post-acute care

Safely Adapting to the New Normal

"Can I go shopping?" "Can I attend worship services?" "Can I hug my family and friends?" Rather, "should I" even attempt to do these things? These may be questions that you're asking yourself during this time of transition. We have entered a new phase of dealing with this Coronavirus pandemic and it is uncharted territory for most. As we prepare for our cities, states, and country to re-open and for people to return to parts of their old lives, we find ourselves with many questions to be answered.

The CDC and the Ohio Department of Health have offered some guidelines for businesses during this phased re-opening; these protocols are not only for businesses that deal with the public face-to-face but also for offices and public and private businesses alike. The 5 protocols for ALL businesses (in the state of Ohio) are as follows:

1. **Require face coverings** for employees and recommend them for clients/customers at all times.
2. **Conduct daily health assessments** by employers and employees (self-evaluation) to determine if "fit for duty."
3. **Maintain good hygiene** at all times – hand washing, sanitizing, and social distancing.
4. **Clean and sanitize workplaces** throughout the workday and at the close of business or between shifts.
5. **Limit capacity** to meet social distancing guidelines.
 - Establish maximum capacity at 50% of the fire code.
 - And, use an appointment setting where it's possible to limit congestion.



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Knowing that businesses are taking steps to ensure the health and safety of their employees as well as their patrons is somewhat comforting, but what if you are considered high-risk? Should you venture out into public places, or wait? Being high-risk does not mean that you have a greater chance of catching the virus; it simply means that you are more susceptible to severe outcomes, should you contract it.

Currently, you are considered high-risk if you are 65 or older or have severe obesity, chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, a serious heart condition, a compromised/weakened immune system, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease. It is still recommended that the high-risk population utilize drive-thru or pick-up services when possible.

If you must go inside a business try and do so during non-peak hours, maintain social distancing by staying 6 ft. away from others and wear a face mask or covering. It is always a good idea to sanitize your hands after handling items and when you return home to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. When in doubt about whether or not to venture into public or attend a family gathering, contact your healthcare provider. They can assist you in determining whether the risk is worth the reward.

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As we try to reintroduce nonessential activities into our lives, you may find yourself anxious and nervous about possible exposure. Or maybe you're unsure if you are ready to return to your prior activities.

Rest assured that this feeling is normal. We are all navigating this "new normal" together. Using the following tips can help you to do everything you can to protect yourself and others from getting sick and help you feel more in control about reducing your risk.

1. **Wash your hands** regularly, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
2. **Clean** all high-touch areas every hour.
3. **Wear** a facemask or covering.
4. **Stay six feet away** from others when possible.
5. **Stay home** if you are sick and stay away from others experiencing symptoms if you can.

Remember to try to embrace the return to structure. Lack of a routine can be a driving force for many mental illnesses and can heighten anxiety. Getting into a routine and ensuring proper rest and a healthy night's sleep can make an incredible difference in mood and anxiety during the day.

Sited Sources:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>