

Message from the Firefighters Wellness Center Medical Director, Dr. John Villa

Original Message Sent 3/5/2020

We have had some requests from the participants to put out a general statement regarding this current Coronavirus, COVID-19.

While it is true that we are seeing more cases of this virus here in the US, I do not think that it is time to panic. Our staff at the PBC Firefighters Wellness Center have received internal memos and updates regarding the specifics of this Coronavirus and how to handle any possible patient with symptoms consistent with this Coronavirus. We have been in touch with the CDC and we have an internal protocol on what to do.

As you know, currently there is no vaccination to protect against COVID-19, there is no quick test to diagnose it and currently no medications specifically approved to treat it.

Rest assured, your Wellness Center has planned for this and is well prepared in case we start seeing more patients in this area infected with this virus. However, keep in mind that this is not the first Coronavirus that our country has seen, nor will it be the last. As you recall, the SARS and MERS that were around not that long ago were also Coronavirus'.

And, I would like to mention a couple of other facts:

- 1) COVID-19 seems to thankfully be sparing the very young as we have not seen many infants infected (older individuals and those with medical co-morbidities seem to be more affected):
- 2) We are currently in March, thus by definition, we are heading towards summer when we typically see less respiratory illness. (In other words, I would be much more concerned if we were in October or November and we were seeing the ramping up of the number of new cases).

With all this said, I would continue to recommend frequent hand washing and great caution with touching your face, particularly your nose and mouth. Also, the CDC continues to aggressively recommend the traditional influenza vaccination, which we still have in stock for you. We were also able to grab a couple of extra boxes of Flu vaccines just in case there were more cases than they are predicting.

We would like to request that if you feel that you have had a significant exposure to COVID-19 and you would like to come to the clinic, please call ahead so that we

can prepare for your arrival. This will help limit exposing other patients and give staff a chance to protect themselves as much as possible.

We will continue to stay vigilant at your Wellness Center and we will keep you updated if there seems to be a significant change in the outlook. As always, we welcome you to present to the clinic for evaluation if you have any symptoms or simply to discuss the matter further with one of our highly qualified staff members.

Truly yours,
Dr. Villa