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## **Call-line to help with potential COVID-19 cases in Knox County**

Beginning Wednesday (March 18), Knox County residents who think they might have COVID-19, will have a new resource to get answers to their medical questions.

Knox Public Health and Knox Community Hospital are joining forces to open a call-line for local residents to talk directly with a medical professional about their symptoms and concerns. The call-line number is 740-399-8014. The call-line will be activated Wednesday morning and will be operational from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday.

The call-line will help residents who are symptomatic or concerned they might have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. By talking directly with a medical professional, residents will be assessed and screened for further evaluation, care or consultation, before going to a clinic.

The new call-line is for medical questions only. For other questions regarding COVID-19, residents are requested to call the state hotline at 833-4-ASK-ODH (833-4-275-634). The state hotline is open daily from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

COVID-19 is highly transmissible. Health experts have said that every individual who has the illness will infect an additional 2-3 individuals. For that reason, they want to curb the spread of the illness by limiting contact among potential patients and those who are not sick.

“It’s really important that people use the call-line before going to their doctor, or the ER or urgent care,” said Knox County Health Commissioner Julie Miller. “The call-line staff can determine if your symptoms warrant coming in for further examination,” said Miller.

Symptoms of COVID-19, which generally appear two to 14 days after exposure, include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Unlike the flu or common cold, most COVID-19 patients do not experience sneezing, headaches, or a runny/stuffy nose.

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The majority of patients who are infected with COVID-19 will, at most, feel ill for a few days or a couple of weeks, but will recover without complications. There is no treatment for COVID-19, and no vaccine.

“Many of the people who use the call-line will likely be advised to stay at home, get plenty of rest, and monitor their symptoms for any changes,” said Miller. “It’s important to self-isolate so you don’t pass the virus to others.”

For a small percentage of patients, COVID-19 can lead to serious complications. These patients are likely to be older, have underlying health conditions or have compromised immune systems. Some potential COVID-19 patients may also require in-person medical attention for other reasons.

“Whether you are someone who just needs to stay at home and recuperate, or you need to see a healthcare provider for additional follow-up, it’s important to use the call-line,” said Miller. “It will enable us to track and assess how widely and quickly the virus may be spreading locally.”

Locally, there is no testing for COVID-19. Most testing is done at the Ohio Department of Health laboratory in Columbus. Testing can also be done at private labs including Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp, as well as the Cleveland Clinic.

“What can be done locally, is the collection of a specimen – usually a nasal or throat swab - which must be ordered by a healthcare provider and then sent to the lab for testing,” said Miller. To order a specimen for COVID-19 testing, an individual must meet certain criteria, such as being symptomatic and testing negative for seasonal flu.

“If you think you are sick, use the call-line,” said Miller. “And if you are sick, follow the advice given to you.” Added Miller, “Consider it your civic duty – you are protecting yourself and the other members of the community.”

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