

Senator Jeff Smith Says Take COVID-19 Seriously

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Senator writes about ways we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing, self-isolation and other precautionary measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - We must take COVID-19 seriously. On March 13th, showing tremendous leadership, Governor Evers declared a public health emergency in Wisconsin and has since strengthened precautions. Now it's our turn to do our part by following the guidance from leaders and medical professionals to slow the spread of COVID-19. Undoubtedly, this is a challenging time for us all as we learn to navigate the changes in our daily routine impacted by this global pandemic. It's our responsibility as neighbors to keep our communities healthy and safe for all.

We have learned so much since we first heard about coronavirus and this particular strain, known as COVID-19. Seven other coronavirus strains exist, including one which leads to the common cold. Some skeptics use this fact as reason to scoff at the precautions taken to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, COVID-19 is a new strain and there's still a lot scientists are trying to learn about it. To say that COVID-19 is no more than "a cold on steroids" is like saying a tiger is no more than an overgrown house cat. Yes, they are members of the same species but one is dangerous and vicious while the other is mild and tame.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), the COVID-19 virus is found in droplets from the throat and nose and can be spread when someone coughs or sneezes. DHS also reports that the virus can also spread when someone touches an object with the virus on it; if that person touches their mouth, face, or eyes the virus can make them sick. There are a range of symptoms associated with a COVID-19 infection, but symptoms can include fever, cough or shortness of breath, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). COVID-19 can cause severe respiratory illnesses, pneumonia and death.

In recent weeks, Wisconsin has seen community spread of COVID-19, which means there are people who have tested positive who have no exposure to a known case nor did they travel to a location where there is community spread. Now it's even more important, while scientists and medical professionals research and provide care, that we all do our part to slow the spread.



I have to admit that in the past, I haven't taken the strongest precautions for my own health, like I should. Then I realized that the public health precautions against COVID-19 are not only carried out to protect my personal well-being, but also to protect the health and safety of my loved ones. I'm self-isolating at my home to reduce the risk of community spread to vulnerable populations, like my 95-year-old father or others with compromised immune systems.

Sacrifices need to be made. We all need to follow CDC recommendations and practice social distancing and self-isolation. The CDC also recommends these practices to keep us and others around us healthy: wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; stay home when you're sick; avoid touching your face; cover your cough or sneeze; and clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

It's times like this when the greater good of society is more important than going on with business as usual. Although it hurts that schools, restaurants and bars are shut down while social gatherings are limited to 10 people and we practice social distancing, it is a temporary pain that will slow the spread of COVID-19. We are taking these precautions now to prevent a spike in cases, which would overwhelm our healthcare system. Together, we must practice these measures to protect our family and community and support our hardworking healthcare professionals.

Wisconsin is taking COVID-19 very seriously and we all need to take necessary precautions to keep everyone safe. My next column will have more information about the measures being taken by the Legislature to slow the spread and support families affected by COVID-19.

Every day, there are new updates about COVID-19. Be sure to stay up-to-date on ways to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy and learn about ways to cope during this pandemic by visiting: govstatus.egov.com/wi-covid-19.

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