

Update: June 30, 2020

Stowe Personalized Medical Care

Update for Patients of Stowe Personalized Medical Care from Dr. Bisbee

How is Vermont doing with COVID 19?: On Monday, 6/29/2020, there were 5 new cases in Chittenden County and 1 positive case in Bennington, Vermont. As of 6/30/2020, there have been 1,208 cases of COVID-19 in Vermont and 56 deaths. In Lamoille County, there have been only 29 cases. There have been 64,993 tests done in Vermont to date.

Wear a mask because you care about other people: Approximately **50-75%** of the U.S. understands and complies with the CDC recommendations to wear a mask, wash hands and social distance. Unfortunately, it has become a political statement to wear and to not wear a mask around the country. In the past couple of weeks, there is a dramatic increase in cases of COVID-19 in our country due to premature opening of movie theaters, bars and restaurants. Mass gatherings, especially indoors, and protesting in large crowds have most definitely played a role. Several states are backing off or at least freezing restrictions and many leaders like V.P Pence, Mitch McConnell, and others are starting to role model the behavior (mask wearing). Unfortunately, it is too little too late. Unless everyone wears a mask and follows restrictions, the healthcare system in many hot spots in our country are likely to get overwhelmed. My daughter lives in Texas and works as an ICU nurse where the ICU has been full and patients are waiting in the Emergency Room to be admitted. Other parts of the hospital are being converted to take care of COVID cases which will dramatically increase in the coming weeks. The limiting factor is not a physical bed for COVID patients - it is staffing. So far in our country, over 600 healthcare workers have died due to COVID 19.

Vermont is doing well: That may be because we are a small state and we care about each other. Maybe because we don't have concentrated population centers. Maybe it is our state leadership. Maybe it is because we are following restrictions and recommendations. Keep it up. Don't go into businesses where the employees don't wear a mask. Be a role model. Encourage your family and friends to do the same. But you should probably not confront someone without a mask if you don't know them. This has been shown to not end well across our country.

Restart Vermont: Travelers from "low risk counties" in other states can travel to Vermont without quarantining. These include Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia as well as Washington DC. For up to date information, go to healthvermont.gov/covid19. Stay safe and wear masks and avoid close contact with others. If a business is not being safe, avoid the business. Do what you can to support local businesses but stay safe in the process.

Pop up testing: As of May 21, 2020, "pop up testing" is available in Vermont. Patients can get a test even if they don't have symptoms. You can get a COVID 19 test by going to <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>.

Guidance for Vermonters:

- 1. If you have a medical emergency call 911 or go directly to the hospital**
- 2. If you are having even mild Symptoms of COVID-19, call your health care provider and keep them updated**
- 3. Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet and wear a mask when near others**
- 4. A good resource is healthvermont.gov/covid19**

Business starting up again: The Governor has given instructions on how to open retail businesses and restaurants. Recommendations are changing every week. For more information, you can visit healthvermont.gov/covid19 website.

Antibody testing is not really available yet: UVM has announced that antibody testing is available by sending it to the lab at the Mayo Clinic. However, testing needs to be approved by the Pathologist at UVM. Antibody testing has not been shown to be reliable, reproducible and is difficult to make reservations. For instance, even if you are positive for IgG antibody, you may still be able to get a new infection of COVID-19. It is not recommended that Antibody status be used to make decisions regarding employment, travel or immunity at this time. In my experience, IgM test is often times falsely positive. There are many cases where someone has had COVID-19 and later the IgG antibody test was negative.

Should I put off my medical concerns? It is not a good idea to put off any significant medical concerns. Going to the hospital or emergency room for evaluation can be done safely. Stowe Personalized Medical Care is seeing patients in the office one at a time and patients must wear a mask, just like the staff. We ask you to wear a mask to keep Dr. Bisbee and the staff safe from catching COVID-19.

Specialists are using video conferencing and phone virtual visits. Consultations do not have to be put off. Non-emergent medical tests and appointments can be done now using proper restrictions. If a medical office is not asking patients to wear masks and not following guidelines, you should avoid going to that office.

General recommendations: Elderly patients should continue to stay at home as much as possible. Patients with medical conditions and/or are over 70 years old should make arrangements to get groceries delivered. A cloth mask is recommended when you are near other people (closer than 6 feet). You do not need to wear a mask when you are by yourself, in your car, or outside walking by yourself but have a mask handy if you are potentially coming within 6 feet of others. Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Avoid touching your face, your eyes, nose with unwashed hands or gloves. Avoid contact with people who are sick. Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or Lysol or Clorox wipes.

Symptoms to watch for: Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reported mild-to-severe respiratory symptoms (fever cough and sore throat). Other symptoms may include fatigue, weakness, lethargy and headache. Diarrhea and gastro-intestinal symptoms can also be possible symptoms. Call to discuss your symptoms. Do not go to the hospital or emergency room before you call Dr. Bisbee.

Office Hours: The office is open 9:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday. Dr. Bisbee is available to help you if you need medical care. The office door is locked and you should call ahead as many things can be taken care of by telephone. We call you ahead of your appointment, to make sure you are not showing signs of infection. Dr. Bisbee and staff wear masks and only one patient is in the office at a time. Exam rooms are disinfected between each patient visit. We don't allow anyone to sit in the waiting room.

Call the office at 802-253-5020 or call Dr. Bisbee's cell phone after hours for emergent issues.

House calls: Dr. Bisbee will do house calls when necessary.

Staff are safe: All of the staff have been tested for COVID-19, and we plan to do testing for the staff on a regular basis.

Who should go to the Emergency Room? If you have a life threatening medical issue such as a heart attack or stroke, call 911 without delay. If you are not having life threatening symptoms, call Dr. Bisbee first as he is available by phone 24/7. Patients in Lamoille County without a PCP can call Copley Hospital (802-888-8642) to discuss their individual situation.

What Healthcare appointments should I cancel: Consultations and follow up appointments with specialists are now being done by video conferencing and sometimes in person with strict precautions. Dental offices are opening up with precautions. Physical Therapy practices are seeing patients and using appropriate precautions now. If patients are not being asked to wear a mask or if your healthcare provider is not wearing a mask, you are going to the wrong provider.

What activities can I do? Take a drive in the car, go outside and walk. Work in your garden. You can organize a social gathering with a few friends but it takes some work to organize it safely, keep the 6 foot rule, (10 feet is even better) and think through how you will handle things such as bathroom availability, sitting arrangements, sharing (or not sharing) food to limit closeness. Lots to think about.

After hours: All Stowe Personalized Medical Care patients have Dr. Bisbee's personal cell phone number and email and can text or call him anytime they have an urgent medical problem.