Phoebe and Public Health Encourage Social Distancing

Albany, Ga. – Public health officials are strongly encouraging southwest Georgians to avoid congregating in large groups as coronavirus continues to spread. “We are at a critical point in our efforts to minimize the impact of COVID-19, and we need to take strong steps immediately to prevent further spread of the virus,” said Charles Ruis, MD, Southwest Health District Health Director.

The number of confirmed and suspected COVID-19 cases in Georgia is growing, and there is evidence some groups of those cases are connected. Gov. Brian Kemp announced yesterday several cases were connected to one church. “We understand church services are an important aspect of life in all communities in southwest Georgia. Unfortunately, the close contact congregants have during those services puts them at risk of contracting coronavirus. We are urging churches in the area to consider temporarily cancelling worship services and large gatherings until we get through the worst of this situation,” Dr. Ruis said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is encouraging Americans to practice social distancing. According to the CDC website, that means everyone “should avoid crowded places where close contact may occur.” People should also try to maintain a distance of approximately 6 feet from others.

“During this time of greatest concern, it makes sense for everyone to minimize their close contact with others as much as possible. That is critically important for people at high risk of severe complications from coronavirus. While we know most COVID-19 patients experience relatively mild symptoms, older individuals and those with chronic conditions are at greater risk of developing serious illness that could require hospitalization, and we need to do all we can to protect them from exposure,” said Steve Kitchen, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital.
Other coronavirus prevention tips include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your arm or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

Coronavirus developments are evolving quickly. You can stay up to date on the latest information and guidelines by visiting the CDC website at cdc.gov.

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