

Are We Done With The Lockdown?

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It's been over 30 days of the more or less nationwide lockdown and people are starting to go stir-crazy.

Few of us even remember what day of the week it is anymore. For those that don't, today is Montuewedthfriday, just to help you out.

People are tired of being shut-in. Protesters in various states are making that message clear, telling their state governors that it's time to open the doors of their states' businesses back up. Even if schools and large venues need to remain closed for health reasons, people feel the crunch and need to get back to work. As it is right now, the loss of work is likely to be a bigger problem for many, than catching COVID-19.

Even SWAT Teams Are Helpless Against This

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Unfortunately, there's a lot of misunderstanding and a lot of people who are now saying that it was a mistake to shut the country down. People are looking at the results of the various state lockdowns and using that to say how wrong the projections made by the various computer models were. But there are two things to that; first of all, models are only a best guess, so they are never right. Secondly, a large part of the reason why the actual cases and deaths are so low, is that we did lockdown. That had the desired effect and changed the numbers.

All those who are pointing to the president, his advisors, or the CDC, saying that the lockdown was unnecessary need to realize that the decisions which were made, were made based upon the best information possible at that time. Hindsight is still always 20/20, even when the time between foresight and hindsight is only a few short weeks.

Saying that this is a government boondoggle or even worse, a government hoax (spelled: "conspiracy") is probably even worse. To be honest, I've thought that a few times myself. But every time, I've reminded myself that we aren't the only nation which is dealing with this problem. If it was just happening here in the USA, I might buy this; but I really can't see some of our European friends cooperating with the president, considering that their leaders hate him.

Looking at where we are right now, It's clear that the president wants to open the nation's doors for business once again. That makes sense, considering that he's a businessman. At the same time, he appears to be trying to balance what his financial advisors are telling him, with what his medical advisors say. That may be an impossible balancing act, but it happens to be the one he's stuck with right now.

This has led to the White House putting out their Guidelines for Opening up America Again. It's a three-phase plan, which contains guidelines, more than details of what people should do. The actual decisions of how this plan will be implemented are being left to state and local officials; the same ones who created the lockdown orders in the first place.

Looking at this cynically, I'd say the president was trying to beat the various state governors to the punch. There are a few governors who seem to be just as anxious as Trump to get their states open for business as he is, including Governor Cuomo of New York and Governor Abbott of Texas. In rolling out his plan for opening the nation first, the president gets to say that he's in charge and that things are being done in accordance with his directives. But in fact, it's the governors who are calling the shots, albeit most of the time following the president's recommendations.

So What Does this Mean for Us?

First of all, as preppers, we shouldn't be depending on the government for our guidelines. While we should listen to what the government is saying, so that we know what they are telling everyone else, our decisions shouldn't be made based upon government "recommendations." Rather, we should make our own decisions based upon our training, knowledge, and understanding of the situation. That may be in agreement with what the government says, or it may not be, depending on the situation.



One thing is for certain; just because they are opening up the country, doesn't mean that the virus has been defeated. SARS-CoV-2 is alive and well and will continue to infect as many people as it can. As of yet, there is no vaccine and no definitive treatment which has been proven to work.

Yet many people are looking at the potential opening of the country as indicating that the crisis is over and the virus has been defeated. For the most part, these are probably people who have not been paying much attention to what has actually been happening and have been saying all along that this is just another form of flu. They are people who aren't taking any precautions. They don't care, because they either don't recognize the danger or think they're immune to it.

People like that aren't going to be taking any precautions, once the lockdown is lifted. Why should they; they haven't up to this point? So they'll be out and about, just like before. The difference is, there will be many more people out and about, as restrictions start lifting. I would be surprised if many of these people started wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

The result of all this is going to be an increase in the number of cases of COVID-19. But then, we knew that all along. All the computer models showed us is that the measures we have taken up to this point were going to flatten the curve so that the available medical services were not overrun by the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases. There was never anything in the plan to say that the overall number of people who became ill would be lowered by the lockdown; they would just be spread out over a longer period of time.

On top of this, people are going to be returning to work, where many will be in close proximity to others, offering chances for the disease to spread. We still have no idea how many people are walking around, infected by the disease, but asymptomatic.

A recent study undertaken at Stanford University[1] indicates that somewhere between 2.5 to 4.2% of the population here in the US has developed antibodies for COVID-19, indicating that those people have been infected at some point in time. Yet, to date, only 0.2% of the population is counted in the number of "total cases" here in the US. This indicates that most people who are infected by the virus never develop symptoms. Yet nobody yet knows if these people could have or still can infect others.

This huge knowledge gap we still have about the Novel Coronavirus means that there is absolutely nothing in place or in the plan to mitigate against those people unknowingly spreading the disease.

This turns going back to work into something of a craps shoot. But there really is no alternative, unless we can all continue to work from home and stay under lockdown. The logistics of testing 327 million people for COVID-19 are huge and unless someone can come up with a simpler test, such as one that detects the antibodies, it's just not going to happen. Making enough tests, even of a simpler test, is a huge task.

I can't tell you for sure, but I would say that COVID-19 is going to be a part of the landscape for quite some time to come. Until they come up with either a cure for it or a vaccine to stop it, we're all going to be at risk for the disease. Actually, I'd say we're going to be at an even greater risk for the disease than we have been during the lockdown.

How do We Deal with This?

As America... or at least parts of America get ready to go back to work, we must ask ourselves the question, "What am I going to do?" Put another way, the question is, "How am I going to keep myself and my family safe when things open back up?"

While the government is putting out guidelines for continued social distancing and other measures, we should not just accept what the government is saying, without analyzing the situation ourselves. If anything, the government's measures are not likely to be stringent enough, rather than too stringent. So really what we need to look at is what we should add to what the government is recommending or ordering.

Social Distancing



A lot of credit is being given to social distancing as part of the reason why the total number of COVID-19 cases has been so low. I don't feel that I'm in any place to dispute that. There is ample evidence to show that the disease travels through the air via droplets for some distance. But the information I have seen (some of which comes from the CDC) indicates that the distance is more than the six feet that the CDC is calling for is not enough. We should be maintaining 12 feet of distance.

Granted, that's not always possible. There are

few workplaces which allow you to stay that far from others. There are also countless other situations, like shopping and paying a cashier, where you have to get considerably closer than 12 feet, just to deal with people. Nevertheless, any time you can put distance between yourself and others, it's still a good idea to do so.

As part of that, I'd avoid public transportation altogether, if you can. The most blatantly obvious thing about public transportation is that everyone is close together. Like public schools, that creates an environment ripe for the spreading of disease.

I'd also try to continue working from home if your company will let you. If there's one thing that the last month should have shown us, it's that many more people can work effectively from home, than what is normal. That's actually beneficial to employers, as they don't have to pay for office space for all those people. Of course, it places a large burden on workers to ensure that their employer is receiving their money's worth of their time.

Masks



While masks were decried by our medical community, at the beginning of this pandemic, they have since changed their tune. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, I would say that their earlier position

was due to how they use the masks, without thinking outside the box. Current thinking has expanded beyond that, including the idea that absorbent cloth masks are actually better for people to use, than regular medical masks.

My wife will be returning to her office soon and we're already making masks for her to use, even though she has a private office. Not a mask, mind you, but enough to last her a couple of weeks. Each mask will only be worn one day before it goes into the wash. That allows us the opportunity to disinfect her masks before she reuses them.

I don't expect that she will be wearing her masks all day long. However, she has already stated that she'll be wearing them when she goes in, when she comes out and when she has to meet with other people, whether in her office or elsewhere. That should provide pretty good protection.

Hand Washing

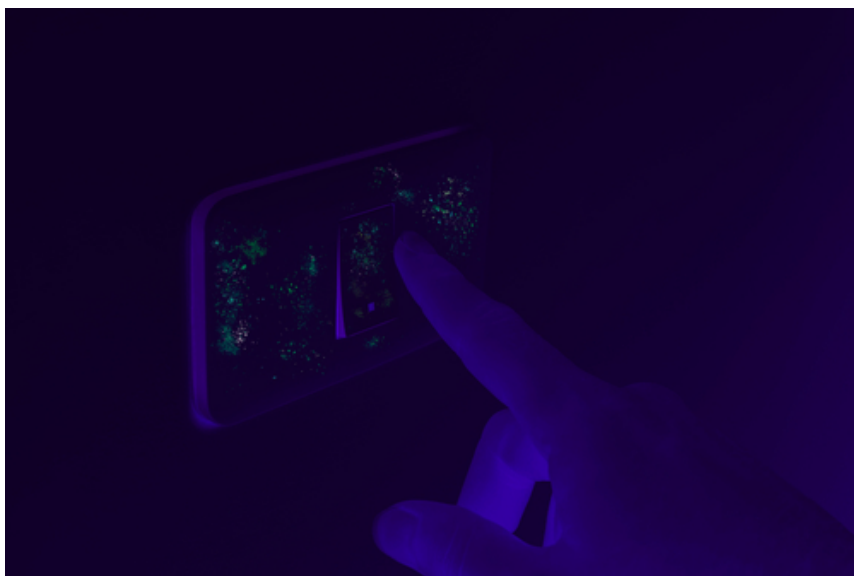


The other big thing the government has been pushing is hand washing. That's a good idea anyway and will probably help us to avoid catching the flu so often. Since we've already developed the habit of washing our hands or using hand sanitizer, whenever we come into contact with something that we don't know is safe, it only makes sense to continue that habit.

Of course, finding a hand sanitizer is still difficult. But if you can't find it, you can make your own. Please note though, most recipes are calling for 70% rubbing alcohol. This is incorrect. That 70% alcohol is fine to disinfect your hands if you are using it alone; but if you mix it with aloe vera or other ingredients, you don't end up with a concentration over 60%. To get that, you have to be using 91% or higher rubbing alcohol. The recipe then becomes:

- 2 cups 91% or higher rubbing alcohol
- 1 cup aloe vera gel (not aloe vera juice; if you can't find aloe vera gel, you can use a gel sunburn medication, which will be mostly aloe vera and glycerin)
- 15 drops or so of essential oil with disinfectant qualities, like tea tree oil or lavender oil

UV Light



People who work in private offices might want to consider installing an ultraviolet light in their office. Ultraviolet light between 200 and 400 nanometers has been shown to be fatal to both bacteria and viruses. Interestingly enough, "black light" which is relatively inexpensive, falls in the 320 to 350-nanometer range, so it qualifies for this purpose.

I have purchased a 60 watt LED UV light, which we will be installing in my wife's office. Whenever she has visitors in her office, that light will be turned on, pointing up at the ceiling to reflect off the ceiling

tile and left on for several minutes after the visitor has left. That way, any of the viruses that gets left behind will be destroyed, whether in the air or on surfaces.

Please note that you don't want to leave the UV light on all day; it can cause sunburn. UV light has also been shown to be a cause of skin cancer if you get too much of it.

Decontamination

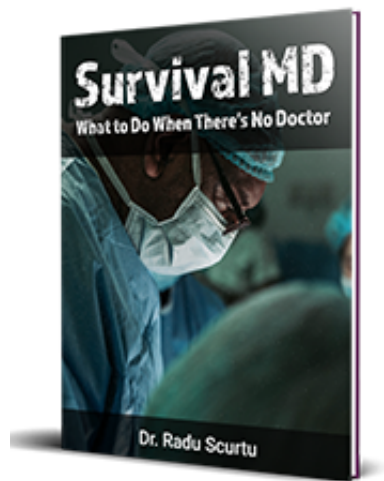


Finally, just like your home, it's a good idea to decontaminate everything you come into contact with at your work. When the mail is delivered, decontaminate it. If someone drops off a report, rather than e-mailing it, decontaminate it. If they bring you something to work on, decontaminate that too.

The abovementioned UV light can be used for disinfecting these items, just like it decontaminates your office. Another option is to run documents through the copy machine. In this case, you could be sure that the copies would be clean, but the bright light will provide enough UV to disinfect the originals as well. Then there's always the old standby, disinfecting them using normal disinfectants, just like you're disinfecting your groceries at home.

Of course, if you open the package or envelope and take out the contents, then throw the package away, you should be okay. The contents probably aren't contaminated. Just be sure to use hand

sanitizer on your hands, after opening the packages.



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[1] <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.14.20062463v1>

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