Understanding COVID-19
A plain-language guide for understanding the COVID-19 outbreak

What is COVID-19?

- A new sickness that is spreading to places around the world, even here in our community.
- It can also be called coronavirus. Coronavirus and COVID-19 are the same thing.

How can I get COVID-19?

- Someone sick with COVID-19 gives you their germs.
- Germs get into your body through your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- When someone is sick and they cough or sneeze, their germs can get in the air, on you, and on other things near by.
- Touching something with germs and then touching your face can spread the germs to you.

What happens when someone is sick with COVID-19?

- They might have a fever.
- They might cough.
- Their body might hurt or ache a little.
- They might have a hard time breathing.
- Remember, lots of people cough or get a fever. If these things happen to you, it does not mean you have COVID-19. It might mean you are sick with something else like a cold or flu.
- Most people do not get very sick when they have it. It feels like having a cold or flu.
- A few people might get very sick. They might need to go to the hospital to help them get better. Most people don’t need to go to the hospital.

If I am feeling sick, what should I do?

- Call your doctor’s office and tell them how you are feeling. Follow the instructions they give you.
- Do not visit the doctor without calling first. They need to know that you’re feeling sick so they can be ready to help you.
- Stay home and keep away from other people.
- Use tissues for coughs or sneezes, then throw them away.
- Try to keep the objects and surfaces around you clean.
- Call your doctor again if you are getting worse or if you are having trouble breathing.
What do I need to do so that I stay healthy and don’t get sick?

- Wash your hands with lots of soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If it helps, you can count to 20 or sing “Happy Birthday”.

- Wash your hands after using the bathroom, before eating, and after going out in public (like going to a store or riding the bus).

- Washing your hands well with soap and water is important. If you don’t have soap or water near by, you can use hand sanitizer.

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow to help stop germs from going into the air and on your hands.

- Try your best not to touch your face. Remember, germs get into your body through your eyes, mouth and nose. If you have to touch your face, do it with a clean tissue or wash your hands first.

What do I do if someone I live with gets sick?

- Someone else living in your home could get COVID-19 or think they might have these germs in their body.

- Stay at least 6 feet away from the sick person until they get better.

- Keep washing your hands with lots of soap and water.

- Do not touch places, things or food that the sick person has touched.

- The sick person should stay home unless they are going to the doctor to get medical care.

- It’s ok to be worried, just remember most people with COVID-19 only get a little sick and will get better soon.
How will my daily routine be different while the COVID-19 outbreak is happening?

- Your daily routine might be different for a few weeks or even a few months.
- Even if you aren’t sick, and the people around you aren’t sick, your routine might still have to be different for a few weeks or months.
- If you have a job, your work might be closed or have different hours. You might not go to work for awhile.
- You will not be able to go out and visit places you like to go like the mall, the library, movie theaters or restaurants.
- You might not be able to visit with friends or family as much, but there are still ways you can talk with them.
- If you have a doctor or dentist appointment scheduled that is not for an emergency, your appointment might happen with a video call or it might be rescheduled for a few weeks or months from now.

What things am I allowed to do during the COVID-19 outbreak?

- Everyone is supposed to stay home as much as possible for the next few weeks.
- It is ok to go to the grocery store to get food when you need it.
- It is ok to go the pharmacy to get medicine if you need it.
- It is ok to go outside in your yard.
- It’s ok to go for a walk or a bike ride.
- It’s ok to go to the doctor if you are sick as long as you call first.
- You can do many of the activities you enjoy at home — things like arts and crafts, cooking, watching TV, playing games, watching movies, using devices like tablets and phones, singing, dancing, listening to music and reading books.
How should I greet people when I see them?

- The way you greet people will be different for a few weeks or a few months, even if you are not sick.
- No handshaking or fist bumping.
- No hugging or holding hands.
- But you can smile, wave or say hello.

What should I do if I’m feeling lonely?

- Because people have to stay home a much as possible for the next few weeks or months, you might miss your friends and family.
- When you can’t see someone in person, you can talk on the phone, write letters or e-mails, send messages on Facebook or video chat.

What should I do if I’m feeling scared or sad?

- It’s okay to feel scared when something big is happening.
- Don’t watch the news on TV if it’s making you feel scared or anxious.
- Do activities that make you feel happy.
- Talk to people you trust who make you feel safe and happy, like your friends or family. Tell them how you are feeling.
- Ask someone you trust to help you make a plan for if you are sick. Make a list of who will take you to the doctor, who will check up on you, and who can go shopping for you.
- If you are feeling sad or scared and want to talk to someone, you can call the St. Clair County Community Mental Health COVID-19 Support Line at 810-985-8900 Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm.