

ADVERTORIAL

COVID-19 | STAY SAFE

Dr. George Rapier is
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My Fellow Americans,

COVID-19 is a serious, and in some cases, a deadly matter. Many are letting their guard down. We are tired of face masks and social isolation. We are fed up with COVID-19. We may be tired of COVID-19, but it is not tired of us.

The second surge has hit us straight on, especially in Florida and Texas. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports younger adults now lead the rate of new infections. Many experts believe loosened restrictions in many states are to blame.

The crisis is reaching a tipping point in communities like San Antonio, Texas. On Saturday, June 27, the City of San Antonio issued an alert for residents of the nation's seventh largest city to stay home because local hospitals are reaching capacity.

The number of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 surged 700% in the past week. The number of ICU patients on ventilators doubled. The average age of patients in the hospital dropped from 60 to 45 as the disease spread among younger people.

One of the COVID-19 tracking websites that I monitor is worldometers.info, regularly used by world governments and research institutions such as Johns Hopkins University. In recent weeks, we have seen a dramatic daily increase in new cases. Deaths per day are on the rise. Six times as many people with active known infections out there spreading the virus. It could get worse with summer vacations and holidays.

It's clear many are not taking the danger seriously. While the mortality rate for COVID-19 is about 1%, that is still 15 to 30 times higher than the seasonal flu. For people age 80 and older who contract COVID-19, the risk of dying soars to 15 to 20%.

Recent numbers from the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* shows hospitalizations were six times higher among patients with a chronic condition such as obesity, diabetes lung disease or heart disease. Deaths were 12 times higher.

You owe it to yourselves, your family and community to be responsible. If you aren't, you are endangering yourself, your loved ones, and others in your community. If you don't do the right thing, you put peoples' lives at risk. To put it plainly, you could be the reason someone loses their life or a loved one.

*www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6924e2.htm

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I urge you to do your part.

- **Stay home:** As much as possible, eliminate in-person interactions with others to lower your risk of exposure. When you do leave home, stay outside as much as possible. Take advantage of curbside pickup and touchless transactions.
- **Always wear an effective face mask in public:** Always cover your nose and mouth. Avoid people who do not wear a mask. Don't go to stores or restaurants where employees aren't wearing masks properly. Even then, spend as little time as possible with other people. Masks reduce the probability of transmission, but don't eliminate it.
- **Practice social distancing:** If you must go out, stay at least six feet away from others and, of course, wear a face mask.
- **Practice good hand hygiene:** Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds frequently every day, before eating and after using the bathroom. If you use hand sanitizer, make sure it has greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as active ingredients, per CDC recommendations.
- **Avoid visiting those at higher risk:** If you have older relatives or family members with chronic conditions who do not live with you, avoid seeing them in person as they are at higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19.
- **Don't postpone necessary health care appointments:** Talk to your doctor about options to keep up with your health while staying safe.

Additionally, you must postpone any elective surgeries. It's not safe to be in the hospital or an outpatient surgical center if you don't have to be there. Talk to your primary care provider before any elective procedure.

Knowledge is power. Use this knowledge to protect yourself and your family. It is the greatest weapon we have right now in the fight against this deadly virus. **Let's protect one another.**



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