

Dr. George Rapiere is the founder, chairman and CEO of WellMed Medical Management, Inc.



My Fellow Americans,

As a doctor, I got into medicine to help people stay healthy and feel their best, so the current situation has me deeply concerned for my family, my patients and for humanity.

We are all connected. We breathe the same air, look at the same sky and deep down have the same vulnerabilities. Bear with me just a minute. You may be saying, "it's just a cough, a fever and a little shortness of breath. Many people don't even experience symptoms. I am strong. It's no big deal. I will survive." But it does affect all of us.

Historically, pandemics follow a trend. Once a certain level is reached, there is a leveling off or a downward trend. That is typically when societal restrictions are lifted because we are "in the clear." Victory is declared, and people resume everyday living.

However, history shows us this is when we learn we were not "in the clear," and infection and incidence rates skyrocket. Societal restrictions are not only put back in place, they now must be even more restrictive to get the situation under control.

Stay-at-home orders and social distancing restrictions have many yearning for their freedom and fresh air. But when it comes to our health, we aren't all at the same place in our lives. No matter when and how COVID-19 restrictions and rules are partially or completely lifted, it's important to talk to your doctor about what is right for you before stopping precautions.

It's even more important for older adults, caregivers, and the 6 in 10 Americans with a chronic condition¹ - as well as those who live with or are in close contact with people at higher risk - to talk to their doctor before going back into public. You could be more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 or transmitting it to someone. People more at risk should continue practicing preventive measures, including sheltering at home and social distancing.

Because we don't have a handle on how the situation will play out, prevention is the best medicine. These practices can help:

- Social distance and shelter at home.
- Keep up with your doctor visits. Many doctors offer online appointments, as WellMed offers today.
- Practice good hygiene and wear a protective mask.
- Limit public interactions for only necessary trips.
- Use technology to talk to your loved ones through Facebook, FaceTime, texting or other technology to keep your spirits up.
- Call Optum Behavioral Health line **1-866-342-6892** to speak with a licensed medical professional and practice 4-7-8 breathing. To see a video of the breathing exercise, go to YouTube and search for "Dr. Weil 4 7 8" or visit www.drweil.com/videos-features/videos/breathing-exercises-4-7-8-breath/.
- Answer your phone, because many providers are doing welfare checks to see if you're OK and if you need anything.
- Talk to your doctor if you're not feeling well, and only go to the ER if it is an emergency.

I urge all of you to take these precautions seriously. There is no current vaccine available to ward off COVID-19. The choices you make can mean life or death for you or for someone else. We're all in this together; let's take care of one another. Give your loved ones at home a hug and let them know what they mean to you. Stay safe and social distance.



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STAY SAFE, SOCIAL DISTANCE