**St Mark of Ephesus Greek Orthodox Cathedral**

**May 2020-Parish Nursing Ministry**

"We Christians have been called to spread upon the earth the atmosphere of heaven, eternity, love, peace, truth and stillness. But it is very difficult since from our youth, we have learned anger and disobedience, we have become accustomed to approaching everyone with distrust and reserve. We have accepted much evil in our hearts and now we must get rid of it."

Elder Thaddeus, “Our Thoughts Determine our Lives" pg160

As Fr. Thaddeus stated, as Christians, we must rely on our faith and not fear. We have such an incredible heritage in our Orthodoxy.   Glory be to God!

We continue to deal with one of the most difficult situations most of us have seen with this Covid-19 virus. "It's not simply coping with the situation but turning difficult times into a growing experience" Froma Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience*.

**One way to approach the pandemic is through factual information and data.** Many try to spread fear and distrust through misinformation and actually old wives’ tales! One I heard recently was putting a baked potato with pepper on your forehead to waylay the Covid-19 virus. Of course, this will not prevent or treat this virus. Please think carefully when you hear this type of advice!

I'm sharing some symptoms or perhaps combinations of symptoms for Covid-19:

Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, and at least two of these symptoms: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Many patients experience mild symptoms and can recuperate at home but others particularly those with underlying medical conditions may experience more severe respiratory illness. It spreads through the air by coughing and sneezing, and by close personal contact such as touching an object or surface with the virus on it then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

Ways to prevent the spread as with other illnesses are:

* Wash your hands with soap and water at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
* Avoid close contact with people who are sick
* Avoid touching your eyes nose and mouth with unwashed hands
* Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
* When you do go out, wear a mask whenever you are not able to keep a safe distance from others.

If you do develop symptoms such as a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness such as cough or difficulty breathing, call ahead to a health care professional. (information from CDC guidelines)

Dr. Sean Leng, Professor of Immunology at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine has suggested ways to strengthen your immune system to help prevent diseases or at least the severity of illness and disease. Actually, he states **'exercise may be the most important lifestyle intervention you can add'** in a 2019 study in ***Nature Reviews***; he also noted that **skeletal muscle is a major immune regulatory organ that generates anti-inflammatory and immunoprotective proteins called myokines.** Exercise strengthens the body and again may be the most important lifestyle intervention you can add.

Another health risk is obesity and good intervention is weight management. Getting to a healthy weight could be a major factor in decreasing inflammation levels and therefore fighting infection. Self-knowledge about your physical and or chronic conditions are also important to notify your doctor of any changes so there can be adequate interventions. **Nutrition is also important in developing a strong immune system.**  A 2018 study in ***Nutrients*** showed that basic nutrients like Vitamin A, C, D, E, and B along with folic acid, iron, selenium and zinc are essential for developing a good immune system, and striving for balance, eating not just vegetables but also good protein and fiber according to the studies. We have a lot of immune cells in the gut that help regulate health.

As I have mentioned previously, another area that is being studied is the impact of stress on the immune system and how it makes us more vulnerable to disease by developing a chronic immune response. Scientists have suggested using anti-stress activities to calm yourself and Glory be to God, we have our Orthodoxy! We have we have our spiritual life of prayer and reading the rich history of the lives of the Saints to guide and direct us. And when we have issues or problems, as our Metropolitan said, “**The Church is our spiritual hospital so we should share our fears and concerns with our spiritual fathers knowing their prayers are with us**”. But most of all we have our beloved Holy Mother covering us and our Lord who with His Glorious Resurrection has given us faith hope love and eternity.

As always, if you do have any physical issues, please contact your health care provider.

Love in Christ,

Elizabeth Ashton RN