

Montreal March 31st, 2020

To all members of Quebec's Jewish community,

We would like to wish all members of the community and all Quebecers with COVID-19 a rapid recovery. We would also like to offer our deepest condolences to the families of those who have unfortunately succumbed to this disease.

In these difficult times, concerned doctors wish to share important information regarding the upcoming Passover celebrations that will take place during the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

An explosion of cases in our community

As you may already know, there has been an exponential increase in the number of cases across Canada, but mainly in Quebec and Montreal. Unfortunately, there are already a worrisome number of reported cases and deaths in our own community. Every individual in our community has a moral, social and religious obligation to act immediately in order to limit the spread of the virus.

Coronavirus disease is highly contagious. Every infected individual has the ability to transmit the virus to 2-3 people. Consequently, these individuals can go on to transmit the virus to an additional 2-3 people and so on and so forth.

The majority of patients with COVID-19 will have flu-like symptoms, stay home and not require hospitalization. However, some individuals will develop severe symptoms and even death. These severe outcomes are more common in vulnerable individuals, however they can and have occurred in younger, previously healthy individuals.

Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19

Public health emphasizes 'social distancing' to slow the spread of the disease and minimize the number of vulnerable people affected. It is therefore **IMPERATIVE** to follow these guidelines and **STAY HOME**. To keep our community safe and healthy, we must all unite and make the necessary sacrifices to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

If you are over 70 years of age or have a chronic illness (diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, immunodeficiency), stay home.

If you are unable to place orders online or over the phone, please ask a healthy family member, who has not been in contact with a COVID-19 positive patient, to do so for you. Please ensure this family member always stays at least 2 meters away from you and drops bags off at your door.

If you are unable to ask a close person to do so, please contact our community organizations, as many volunteers will graciously do so for you.

For everyone else, it is essential to avoid going shopping as much as possible. Please favor phone or online orders.

If you absolutely must go out, please maintain at least 2 meters between yourself and other individuals. Limit the duration and frequency of your outings and consolidate your errands to one area. We ask that you only go out when absolutely necessary.

Wash your hands! Wash your hands! Wash your hands as often as possible! We can't say it enough! Use lukewarm water with soap and rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol gel to disinfect your hands. Do not touch your face after touching objects. The virus can survive for several hours on certain surfaces and you may contaminate yourself or contaminate your loved ones.

Wash your hands! When you get home, wash your-hands!

What about Passover celebrations?

Passover is a time of celebration and a time usually spent surrounded by family and friends. Unfortunately, this year, the seders will have to take place at home with only those who live under the same roof, without any guests. Though

you may be tempted to bend this rule and maybe invite your close ones, we urge you to remember that every additional person is a risk not only to yourself and your family, but also to every member of this community.

It is crucial that nobody travels during Passover. None of your relatives nor friends should be travelling to Montreal for the Holidays, even if they are your own children, parents or close relatives. Even if plans have already been made, please instruct them to CANCEL their trip and ensure they do NOT come.

We must all practice social distancing and respect public health guidelines, no matter how foreign the concept of not gathering physically during the Holidays is to us. We are all in the same situation and do not know how long these guidelines will be necessary. Protect yourselves, protect your loved ones, protect those you wanted to invite, and take action against this deadly virus that threatens our community so greatly. Stay home and stay safe!

Remote social activities

Though you may feel physically isolated, you are not socially isolated. Technological advancements have provided us with the ability to accomplish many activities from home. For example, you can video-conference friends or family to spend time together, cook, play online videogames, play sports and even dine together virtually in your respective dining rooms!

It is permissible to go outside, as long as you are not sick, remain at least 2 meters away from others and limit the duration of your outings. Your children can play outside in your yard or on your terrace with their own siblings. However, it is imperative that they do not have contact with any individuals from other households.

The consequences of non-compliance with public health regulations

A rapid and significant increase in the number of COVID-19 patients could be devastating for the already overworked healthcare system. Unfortunately, a steep rise in cases will overwhelm the system and we will no longer be able to provide optimal care to you and your loved ones given the lack of resources. Moreover, we will not be able to provide optimal care to all the other patients who continue to present with non COVID-19 issues and continue to require our care. Following public health initiatives and maintaining social distancing will limit the progression of COVID-19 cases over time and allow our health care system to function optimally.

We are united for our community!

This pandemic affects us all. We are all going through difficult times. The purpose of this document is to clarify and strengthen health measures to protect us individually and to protect our entire community. These measures may become more restrictive; however, we must comply with all the instructions imposed by our government. Remember that when you make a decision, you make one not only for yourself, but for your neighbors, family and friends as well. Make the correct decision for your loved ones and use the time for personal growth. Set new goals, become active, learn something new and take advantage of the rarity of free time to flourish. Though it may seem to be a never-ending story, all pandemics eventually come to an end. If we follow the guidelines diligently, we will remember this time as one of strength and unity, instead of sickness and death. We will be able to celebrate future holidays and *smachot* as a wholesome Jewish community. We must persevere together through these difficult times!

Chag Pessach Sameach,

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