

Guests for Yom Tov - Message from Local Physicians

As Pesach approaches, a Yom Tov celebrated among multi-generational families and friends, it is hard to imagine that we cannot enjoy this special time with others, as we have had in past years. Unfortunately, this year is not like most years.

We are very troubled by many reports of Baltimore community members hosting family and other out of town guests, as well as in-town family and friends.

The current situation with COVID19 represents the highest degree of Pikuach Nefesh, and is a very real threat to each and every member of our community. Numerous community members have been diagnosed and even hospitalized in Baltimore over the last two weeks, in addition to deaths of Jews in communities all over the world, even of young and healthy individuals. Several of us have seen patients, neighbors, or family members admitted to hospitals, close to dying, even here in Maryland.

The only way to protect ourselves and our community is for us to continue STRICT social distancing.

By having any company – even close family and friends from out-of-town or in-town – you are endangering your own life and the lives of your neighbors and community. This includes all family not currently living in your home — even parents, grandparents, or newlywed children. **It does not matter if they have been isolated at their home for 14 days prior to coming.**

Having company is a direct violation of the instruction of the Baltimore Vaad Harabanim.

We beg and insist that you to take this seriously, as difficult as it may be not seeing close family on Yom Tov. Please keep in mind that these extreme measures are a temporary necessity to guard one's health. Just as we empathize with patients undergoing difficult treatments, we also understand the difficulty that these guidelines impose, and do not mean to suggest these measures are easy to follow. They are however medically necessary.

God forbid that any of us should even indirectly contribute to someone's illness or death.

In addition to the above, travel from Baltimore to other communities should be strictly avoided, as it poses a danger to the community upon your return, even if you have no symptoms.

We recognize that there are very rare cases where the risk must be weighed against other variables. The only clear exception to these recommendations are for individuals for whom isolation poses a substantial physical or psychological danger. No one can consider themselves an exception without specific permission granted to them personally.

For these cases or for other medical questions regarding Coronavirus, we recommend calling your Rav or a new confidential Google voice line- 484-483-5030 where community members can leave a message with specific questions regarding this issue. Questions will be shared in confidence with a small group of physicians and a community Rav, one of whom will return your call with the consensus recommendation.

Lastly, if you develop symptoms of COVID19 or are suspected of having the infection, you should disclose this to all recent contacts so that they can take the appropriate precautions. One should not feel any shame or stigma in doing so, and should be proud to help others stop the spread of the disease.

Again, please understand that these restrictions are for your protection, for the protection of your family, and for the protection of our community.

Let it be the will of the Ribbono Shel Olam that our kehilla kedosha be spared any pain and misfortune.

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This letter has been endorsed by the Baltimore Vaad Harabanim.