

## An ounce of prevention



Masks, social distancing, and other measures can help keep us safe from COVID-19  
By Gregory Culley, MD

By the time you have finished reading this column, 10 people across our country will have died from the Coronavirus. Over 300 others will be hospitalized. And nearly 500 people will have tested positive. Closer to home, on a daily basis, nearly 1,000 new cases of COVID-19 have been diagnosed in New Hampshire and Vermont. Let all those numbers sink in for moment. Each represents lives and families, forever altered by this insidious virus.

We have all heard the phrase “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” It is a simple reminder that things we do in our daily lives have a positive impact on our health. As a primary care physician who has worked in settings across the country for more than four decades, I can safely say that at the heart of good care-and one of my favorite parts of being a provider- is working with my patients to help them understand the many ways in which *they* can impact their personal health.

As the COVID-19 numbers continue to increase in New Hampshire, Vermont and across the country, it is easy to get discouraged and feel helpless. But each of us can take personal steps to help ourselves and others and at the same time, exert some level of control over our own environments. We do this by wearing masks when in public and around others, by practicing social distancing, by maintaining regular hand-washing and other safety tactics. These steps are not hyperbole, they are evidenced-based and endorsed by no less than the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and hundreds of other well respected health and science organizations.

It is believed that the vaccines for COVID-19 could be widely available by next spring or summer. While hopefully the end is now in sight, it is more important than ever before that we remain vigilant and committed to doing whatever we can to stay safe. Please wear a mask when you go out, stay home if you have symptoms and call your healthcare provider.

All of these steps and others are the proverbial ‘preventative apple’ and will help to keep ourselves and others safe.

*Dr. Culley is Acting CEO at Indian Stream Health Center, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) with locations in Colebrook, NH and Canaan, VT. Over a career spanning more than 40 years, he has worked as a primary care provider, physician executive and health care strategist at clinics, health centers and major educational institutions across the country. Learn more at [www.indianstream.org](http://www.indianstream.org)*

*For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 and the steps you can take to keep yourself and family healthy, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/> or <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19>*