

- Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness Show, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Karen Nitzkorski. She is the work-site wellness coordinator for PartnerShip 4 Health, and here to talk about a very important topic. How can we, as employees and employers, support one another, offer resources to one another amidst the Covid-19 outbreak. Thank you so much for taking some time to join me this morning, Karen.
- Karen Nitzkorski...: Thank you. I'm pleased to be here. And I guess my first and most important point is to get the facts and they'll help us maybe mitigate the fear that many of us are experiencing or the stress. So, where do you get the facts? Well, you can get them at Minnesota Department of Health and I know I actually got the link from Lake Region Healthcare's website.
- Karen Nitzkorski...: So, your local medical providers can certainly help with some of these facts also. So, the Minnesota Department of Health website is really valuable and up to date, up to the minute. I shouldn't say up to date. CDC website is another good one. And today, in preparation for this interview, I looked at OSHA's website and they actually have some guidance on preparing workplaces for Covid-19. So, that's some of the things I think we'll start with.
- Katie Johnson: I think it's really important. It's been one of our foundational principles since we started communicating about Covid-19, is that we want to only share credible, reliable and trustworthy resources with our patients and with our community. And I certainly endorse Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC and OSHA websites.
- Katie Johnson: And like you said, we have them all posted on our Covid-19 community page at [lrhc.org](#). So people can find links to those there. When you talk about getting the facts, what are some of the most important facts that these resources are sharing that you want to share with people that are listening today?
- Karen Nitzkorski...: Well, I'd like to go a little deeper with the hand washing, for instance. So, not only promote frequent and thorough hand washing, but including by providing workers, customers, work-site visitors with a place to wash their hands. And if soap and running water and not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Katie Johnson: I think that's a really easy thing that employers can look at doing, is making sure how easy is the access to those places and materials to be very sanitary.
- Karen Nitzkorski...: And you want to encourage any workers to stay home if they are sick. They could be sick for lots of reasons. It doesn't have to be Covid-19. So, just make sure that any workers stay at home because their immune system is not running a hundred percent. And they could infect other people, and then you have a spiral downward of health.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: You also want to encourage respiratory etiquette including covering coughs and sneezes. I know a lot of the news reports that we're hearing are saying that, but it doesn't hurt for us to emphasize that also.

Katie Johnson: And oftentimes, you hear use the crook of your elbow to do that, which is great, but even providing more tissues throughout your workplace for your employees and for visitors is a good practice as well.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: Perfect. That's just what I was going to say, but then not only the tissues but the trash receptacles to put those tissues in.

Katie Johnson: Right.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: And then, employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices such as flexible work sites and flexible work hours to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others. The state and local health authorities is recommending use of social distancing strategies, which we are hearing that.

Katie Johnson: Right.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: We're hearing the new threshold is nothing greater than 50, gatherings of 50 people or more. But I'm even hearing really the stated practice is 10. So, we want to keep those in mind too. But really, even if we have 10, are we in a space where we can keep six feet apart from each other? So, just keep those things in mind too.

Katie Johnson: Yes, absolutely. And as employers, I know most employers are already talking about these flexible work schedules, who can work from home feasibly and how do we make arrangements for that to happen. But for those people that are still working, some other good practices just about not sharing workspaces, right?

Karen Nitzkorsk...: Yes. Their phones, their desks, even their offices or other work tools and equipment when possible. So, maybe when you go to that copier machine that everybody uses, think about maybe even having a wipe that you can wipe down after you use it.

Katie Johnson: Right. And you mentioned that disinfection, just maintaining those really regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting and making sure the products we're using are EPA-recommended for disinfectant.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: Yes, exactly. And then, taking it to a different level of what you can do for your coworkers and for your employees, if you are a manager, say, bring in more water for people to drink. Bring in some fruits and vegetables and have those available, because we want to maintain our health. So, we want to make sure we're giving them adequate breaks to do some physical activity. Walking around the campus or getting up and doing a brain break or...

- Karen Nitzkorsk...: It's really important to maintain our physical health and the best way to do that is to take physical activity breaks and to eat more healthy food and also drink water, and then also to get good sleep. Now, that one is a tough one, because how do we encourage that?
- Karen Nitzkorsk...: One of the ways to encourage them is to de-stress before you go to sleep. And don't do exercise right before you go to bed. Don't drink caffeine later in the day. Don't maybe even drink water right before you go to bed, so you can get better sleep. But also write down three good things that happened to you that day before you go to work or before you go to sleep, and that helps de-stress and helps you with a better sleeping pattern.
- Katie Johnson: I have recently... That was one of my new year's resolutions, to write down the three good things before I go to sleep each night. And it has been a really good way to frame your mind for a restful night. And I just want to re-emphasize that when we talk about prevention and precautions, there's really two things we can do, right? We can do those things you were talking about, in terms of staying home when you're sick, disinfecting the surfaces, maintaining distance from other people, those physical precautions.
- Katie Johnson: And the other thing we can do is boost our own immunity. And that's exactly what you're talking about. If we boost our immune system by feeding it nutrient-dense food, drinking water, getting good rest, we are truly doing the things that we can control and taking those proactive measures on our own. So, I think those are great.
- Katie Johnson: You and I before the show talked a little bit about the other side of this as we talk about social distancing, working from home. The topic of isolation comes up when you think about quarantine, and that brings its own set of challenges.
- Karen Nitzkorsk...: It certainly does. And I've been listening to some specialists on morning news and one had these great tips, is to set up a routine if you are at home, some kind of a routine and be productive. If you're working or not working, either way, set up some kind of routine. Make sure, again, that you're finding some time for physical activity, that you're eating healthy. Don't go to the chips all the time. That's my downfall. I didn't say chocolate. I said chips because that's-
- Katie Johnson: I don't mind chocolate.
- Karen Nitzkorsk...: And then, you want to keep in touch. You either want to keep in touch with your coworkers if you're doing work, and you can do that through email or phone calls or texting. I mentioned already being productive. Let's say you're not working. Well, clean that closet that's been bugging you for a long time so that you feel like you're being productive.
- Karen Nitzkorsk...: You might need to journal and write down some of the things that you're feeling. Instead of pushing all those isolating feelings to the side, journal them. If

there is someone else in your home, make sure you're having discussions with them about the same kinds of things, and seeing if there's things you can find laughter about to look for. Look for some of your joys and some of the things that make you feel good about yourself.

Katie Johnson: Right. That's so important. And it really leads into just the whole topic of mental health and resiliency and the importance of paying attention to the stress levels that come with a situation like we are facing in our society today.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: And I guess I want to back up too for all of us to really think about trying to be kind and grateful to each other, and not judging and having generosity of spirit or sometimes they call it the spirit of generosity. Don't judge your neighbor because maybe they bought that extra roll of toilet paper. Just realize that their comfort level was so stressed that it felt like they needed to buy that extra roll of toilet paper.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: So, we just need to give everybody a break, give ourselves a break and really practice kindness and generosity. Find the good things in people and really focus on that and the positives. And then, we'll just be able to trust each other more and work together to get through this in a much more positive way. So, kindness, gratitude, making connections in every way that we can without being close in distance is very important.

Katie Johnson: And I think so much of this reminds me of the THRIVE initiative that we've talked about on this show in the past and how important that is, not only to making others feel good and safe, but also making ourselves feel better about ourselves. And to me, that's the best part of a crisis, is seeing the good that comes out in people and how we can make such a difference when we come together.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: Yes. And think about your neighbors. I mean, we really have had a little bit of crisis of toilet paper in Fergus Falls and I'm sure eventually we'll get some. But if you feel like you have an extra roll, go and knock on your neighbor's door maybe and say, "I have some toilet paper for you." And then run away, so that you're keeping your distance. But, I mean, think of little things that you can do that for people, if that's even possible.

Katie Johnson: It's a whole new meaning to tee-peeing your neighbor, right? I really just want to emphasize again to people that when we, in our healthcare organization take a step back and all of the planning and preparedness and precautions that we are taking, I want to express the gratitude to my coworkers and my team members here at Lake Region Healthcare. They are working around the clock to make sure that we are prepared.

Katie Johnson: But then, I also want to emphasize that it takes all of us. So, employers, employees, community members at large working together to do your part. Social distancing, we mentioned in our comments and one of the things I want

to mention about that is that it's not about a fear of contracting the virus that makes social distancing so important. And we will really try to share some more information about that with our listeners. Please check our website regularly.

Katie Johnson: But really what it's about, to understand it, is about taking precautionary measures to slow the spread, so that our healthcare systems don't become overwhelmed and overtaxed. So, I encourage you all to read more about that. Well, like I said, share some resources about that on our website. Karen, do you have any other resources or tips you want to leave our listeners, employers, employees, community at large with before we wrap up today?

Karen Nitzkorsk...: The only thing is just to take care of each other. To take care of yourself and to take care of each other. And let's dig deep and we'll be able to come out on the other end of this stronger.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. Karen Nitzkorski, the work-site wellness coordinator for PartnerShip 4 Health, my guest today on Apple a Day. Thank you for sharing, your time, your expertise and taking some time just to offer this reassurance to all of us that when we come together and use good resources, good knowledge, we'll come through it stronger together.

Karen Nitzkorsk...: You're welcome. It's been my pleasure.

Katie Johnson: Karen and Katie on Apple a Day. Today reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.