

It's time we all act like we have COVID-19

Ask yourself: What safeguards should you be putting in place?

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Let's do a little thought experiment.

Imagine that you know you have COVID. You feel fine; in fact, you cannot believe the test turned positive because you feel absolutely nothing at all – no symptoms. So you got a second test, and it also just returned positive.

But nobody else knows you are positive; only you.

What would you do? You know you are contagious. Would you go to work? Nobody would know, and they are depending on you and you feel just fine.

Would you wear your mask more carefully? Maybe find one that fits better and doesn't slide down your nose all the time?

Would you keep that date for coffee with your best friend? Would you give him a hug – or even a high-five? Would you go grocery shopping, or would you try to figure out that “curbside pick-up” thing?

Would you call your family and cancel the holidays? You feel fine, and you haven't seen your family for so long, and they are getting older every day.

Would you swing by your folks' place to watch football tonight? Would you call your daughter's school to tell them she needs to stay home? Would you tell the dentist before your visit to get that horrible toothache fixed? Would you tell anyone at all, or say nothing and avoid the questions and shaming?

Would you stay home in your room, eating only what you have in the fridge, for 10 days? Through the holiday? Using up all of your leave at work? Who would look after the kids?

OK, now let's come back to reality. Thanks for taking that little mental walk with me.

Here is the point: There is a reasonable chance that you have COVID-19 right now, and don't know it. We all need to act all of the time like we have – or could have – COVID-19 and are contagious.

We all need a plan for what we will do if we get a positive test result. Who will look after the kids? How will you get food? Who do you need to tell at work or at school?

And you don't need to feel shame – unless you really haven't been careful – because research shows that most people, around two-thirds, have no idea where they contracted COVID.

This is about personal responsibility. The way we turn this pandemic thing around is by each of us acting like we are contagious. It's going to take hunkering down, not visiting friends, being super good about wearing your mask, distancing more than 6 feet from people who don't live with you, and sanitizing whenever you think about it. Get in some non-perishable groceries, like rice, beans and canned vegetables; and if you haven't already, pick out some books or shows, and let the bingeing begin.

Winning this war we are waging is going to take each of us acting individually and taking personal responsibility to knock out this virus.

Dr. Malcolm Butler is the Health Officer for Chelan-Douglas Health District. He is a board-certified family physician who has practiced in Wenatchee since 1993. Dr. Butler also serves as the Chief Medical Officer of Columbia Valley Community Health. Watch for his weekly COVID-19 community update, Better Together, on the health district's YouTube channel.