

Seven Mile Medical Clinic adapts during COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Sook Yin and her team at the Seven Mile Medical Clinic are working diligently to protect their patients from the life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic that is in our community.

This has meant changing how they do business, from booking appointments to assessing patients, in a bid to limit the spread of the disease.

Yello Cayman asked Dr Yin for some advice and insight into how the Seven Mile Medical Clinic is continuing to meet their patients' health expectations.

In January, when you first saw news reports about coronavirus developing and spreading in China, what were your thoughts and fears?

When we first heard about the new coronavirus back in January many of us thought it would not impact us and our lives here in the Cayman Islands. What a difference a couple of months makes! It soon became apparent that we had to be proactive and implement new ways of managing our clinic and assisting our patients while protecting ourselves. Suddenly, every single person in our community had become at risk of catching this deadly virus.

How has your clinic adapted to the new way of treating patients in Cayman?

Our entire team is available to assist our patients with their medical needs during this time. Our doctors are offering telemedicine consultations instead of face-to-face consultations. There is a charge for these consultations, ranging between \$40 and \$100 and we will bill patients' insurance companies. As with in-office consultations, patients may have out of pocket charges that they need to pay i.e. they may have a deductible to meet or a co-pay for the consultation.

How do you and your team protect yourselves?

As part of the screening and testing of frontline healthcare workers for the virus, the entire staff of the Clinic and CARE Pharmacy have been tested and reported as negative. We will continue to take all necessary precautions to maintain this status including the use of personal protective equipment and hand and respiratory hygiene in the office and during all patient interactions.

It's an emotional and worry time for everyone, how are you advising persons to cope with anxiety?

Working from home, home schooling kids, social distancing, curfews and lockdowns can all be incredibly stressful and lead to anxiety and fear. If you are dealing with any of these emotions, it is important that you address them. If you have an existing relationship with a mental health professional, reach out to them as many are offering telemedicine consultations. Alternatively, reach out to your healthcare provider.

Things that you can do on your own is to limit the amount of time you are tuned in to the media or on the web researching COVID-19. While Facebook is a good way to stay connected with friends which is important, try and avoid reading too much virus-related information there. This is also a good opportunity to do tasks around the house or maybe try a new hobby.

It's important to maintain a routine and to exercise daily. It may also be a good time to practice meditation and we recommend apps such as Calm and Headspace.

What is your recommendation regarding wearing a mask?

Wearing a mask when you are in public places is recommended. You do not need to wear a surgical mask, you can wear a cloth covering. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advice on how to make and wear a cloth covering and a surgical mask.

Cloth face coverings should -

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
- be secured with ties or ear loops.
- include multiple layers of fabric.
- allow for breathing without restriction.
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. They should be washed regularly.

When removing the mask, you must be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash hands immediately after removing.

Describe the process of testing for COVID-19.

Currently, the only way to test for the virus in the Cayman Islands is a nasopharyngeal swab. This is a mucus sample from the nose and back of the throat. The test has limitations as it can only tell if you are infected at the time you have the test. The Cayman Islands Government has established guidelines

for testing – visit their webpage at www.gov.ky/coronavirus for the current guidelines. If you have symptoms talk to your doctor. Even though a swab has been collected, you are not “tested” until your swab has been analysed using a special process and a result obtained. Testing is available at both the Health Services Authority and Doctors Hospital.

We are inundated with health advice from local and international medical resources, but what is your best advice for the local community to avoid becoming infected?

Very simply, we are asking our patients and the community to adhere to the following:

Social distancing – stay at least six feet or two metres away from other people.

Stay home - unless you have a genuine reason to be out. It is important to exercise but remember to follow social distancing guidelines when exercising. It is especially important for you to stay home if you or anyone in your household is unwell or has been advised by a medical professional to self-quarantine or self-isolate. Communicate with friends and family who do not live in your household using social media such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom. It is important that we still limit our in-person interactions as much as possible.

Wash your hands - handwashing with simple soap and water is one of the best and easiest things you can do to reduce your risk of developing the virus. Remember to wash between your fingers, under your nails and up to your wrists. The process should take about 20 seconds. If you do not have access to soap and water, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol

Wear a mask - when you are in public places. You do not need to wear a surgical mask, you can wear a cloth covering.

Clean - regularly clean all surfaces in your home and workplace, especially those that are frequently touched. The virus seems to live on surfaces and the time it can live depends on the surface.

Eat a healthy diet - remember to continue to eat a well-balanced diet that includes elements of all food groups.

The team at the Seven Mile Medical Clinic implores our patients and members of our beloved Cayman Islands community to practice all of the above safety precautions and help us to protect you.

Note: Yello Cayman wishes to recognise the hard work and efforts of all physicians and medical professionals caring for us during this pandemic. We thank each and every one of you for working on the front line to ensure our safety and wellbeing.