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PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19 FATIGUE: TIPS FOR THE FAMILY TO AVOID BURNOUT DURING THE PANDEMIC! *Sustaining behavior change isn't easy and can lead to COVID-19 burnout & fatigue*

(Toms River) – After more than a half year of dealing with the challenges and burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Ocean County residents feel they are getting burnt out by adhering to the many safety precautions in place.

“We certainly understand why many people are getting what’s been termed as “COVID fatigue” or “pandemic fatigue,” expressed Daniel Regenye, Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Public Health Coordinator/Health Officer. “People are dealing with a lot of challenges – whether it’s been worries over getting sick or family members getting ill. Many people have lost jobs, while others are forced out of daily routines. Now parents are navigating the process of home schooling for their children. The flu season converging with COVID-19 is a concern for many. Dealing with those types of issues and still trying to do what’s right to protect themselves, their loved ones and the community can wear some people down.”

For the most part people have stepped up and done their part by adhering to the safety measures and protocols such as wearing masks, social distancing, getting tested and other mandates. So how can an individual find helpful solutions for the long haul when it comes to dealing with the unique obstacles presented by this historic public health crisis? Johns Hopkins University offered these useful tips:

Make a commitment:

Behavior changes can start with having a clear intention and making a promise. Wearing a helmet when you bike ride, stopping at traffic lights and many other lifesaving habits begin with a decision. You want to do the right thing to keep yourself and others safe, even if that means a slight inconvenience. The same principle can apply to washing hands, maintaining physical distance and wearing a mask in public.

Stay flexible as recommendations change.

New scientific insights about the virus that causes COVID-19 change experts’ recommendation day by day, which causes confusion. You might be asking yourself: What shall I do if I see others not social distancing? Do I need to wear a mask in my car? Is my child safe playing scholastic sports? It’s hard - but important - to keep up. Sticking with reliable, trustworthy information is essential.

Practice precautions until they’re second nature.

The key is repeating that new process until it becomes a habit. You may notice when you first start flossing or putting your child in a safety seat, it might seem like a chore, even though you know it’s the right thing to do. When it comes to COVID-19 protection just commit to it and over time you’ll find wearing your mask or washing your hands is second nature. Kids, in particular, thrive with routine and structure.

Keep necessary supplies handy.

Ensure it's easy to find a mask - and use it - when you need it. If I can't find one, it's an extra step to have to go looking, so to reduce barriers to wearing one, keep masks in various places. The same idea can apply to hand hygiene. Keeping small bottles of hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) in several spots at home, work and in your car can encourage frequent use.

Use stories to understand risks and consequences.

For a lot of people, getting sick with COVID-19 is an abstract idea, it's something that happens to other people in different parts of the country. But the reality is that the COVID-19 can affect anyone. Read a story about someone who's gone through COVID-19 so it becomes personal to you.

Give kids some choices.

When encouraging kids to wear masks, let them customize their own by allowing them to choose a variety in patterns, colors and proper fabrics they like. Kids can also choose their favorite scent of hand sanitizer or a fun virtual game to enjoy remotely with their friends.

Involve children in keeping families consistent.

Let children have a voice in making sure the family maintains safety precautions. Give them responsibility such as having them remind you should you forget to wear your seatbelt. Giving them that level of involvement helps keep them engaged in safer practices. Parents can give kids permission to remind other family members to maintain physical distance, wear a mask and keep their hands clean.

Regenye went on to say that unfortunately we aren't out of the woods yet and we're still uncertain of any definitive timeline for a COVID-19 vaccine. The Ocean County Health Department, along with its health care partners in the community, and are asking for continued cooperation and to keep up the good work. Try to get everyone involved and this can help reduce the load on just you.

"We've come too far to have any major upticks at this point. If we all keep doing the right thing and if everyone continues to pitch in and support each other then we can mitigate the spread of this virus and get closer to the goal of finding a vaccine," he said.

For more information regarding COVID-19 please visit www.ochd.org. The OCHD is also providing a general COVID-19 Information Call Hot Line for residents and clinicians to answer questions regarding the coronavirus. The number is 732-341-9700 ext. 7411.

The NJDOH (NJPIES) hotline is available for questions around the clock at 1-800-222-1222 or by dialing 2-1-1. Other related sources; for medical COVID-19 questions call [1-800-962-1253](tel:1-800-962-1253) or **Text NJCOVID to [898-211](tel:898-211)** to receive alerts.