



March 2020 Newsletter Volume 4 Issue 9

## ACT NOW TO SLOW THE PANDEMIC!

This special issue is being sent to all DGs and DGEs plus our usual mailing list, because it includes urgent information that will help save lives around the world. Please share with your clubs. The content has been curated by Richard Randolph, MD, ESRAG Chair-elect, who is Chief Medical Officer of Heart to Heart International, working in medical and public health response to an array of disasters.

**Preventing disease and saving lives are central to Rotary's worldwide mission.** This issue summarizes [essential steps Rotarians can publicize to save lives](#) by slowing the challenging spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future issues and web updates will include tips to staying safe through the pandemic.

**Please coordinate your messaging with local health authorities.** Use your Club's trusted voice to get life-saving facts to the community now. Visit the [ESRAG website for references](#), including resources from the World Health Organization to fight misinformation that's spreading like the disease.

**Ironically, we need to work together by staying apart!** COVID-19 is highly contagious. It spreads by droplets from people sneezing or coughing, and by touching surfaces where the droplets fall. Social distancing, staying at home and hand-washing greatly reduce transmission. Specific [social distancing strategies](#) are listed below.



## How Rotary connects the world in 2020: safely, to save lives



*Here's a mid-March Zoom meeting held by ESRAG, one of countless virtual gatherings as Rotarians around the world suspended in-person meetings and took to the Internet to continue their humanitarian work. We're asking you to mobilize your digital and online networks and use the same tools to spread life-saving information.*

**Why is it urgent to prevent exposure NOW?** Because humans do not yet have herd immunity, proven treatments, or a vaccine for COVID-19, we must act immediately to slow the rate of transmission or our health care systems will fail catastrophically, as we've already seen in Italy. Slowing the spread buys us time to develop a vaccine and treatment. The gravity of this crisis is illustrated by the decision of Rotary leaders to cancel two Presidential Conferences and the 2020 Rotary International Convention in Honolulu, and creation of new [COVID-19 grants](#) guidelines by The Rotary Foundation.

"Please remember that personal actions really will help the broader community. Please share the message with everyone (including youth) that we all should take social distancing and more hand washing seriously; remember it's not just about the individual, it's about the collective us," writes Nobel Laureate Jonathan Patz, MD, who provided expert testimony on climate and global health to Rotary's Environmental Sustainability Task Force in February. "Show kindness and compassion, think wisely and creatively about how to keep yourself and your community safe, and let's put differences aside as we find common solutions to reduce the risk of overwhelming our hospitals and preventing unnecessary deaths and severe illness."

**All ages are vulnerable:** Both Swedish Climate activist, 17 year old [Greta Thunberg and her father Svante have symptoms of COVID 19](#), her father's more serious than hers. Under Swedish testing guidelines neither is currently eligible for testing. She has asked her 10 million instagram followers to #stayathome, just as we are asking all of you to do.

**Because most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms, act as if everyone is infected!** People can spread the virus even if they don't feel sick. This is why nations and local authorities across the world have closed schools and non-essential businesses, and an ever-increasing number are ordering people to shelter at home.

**What is the COVID-19, and why is it so urgent to slow its spread?** COVID-19 is a viral disease that first appeared in humans in China in December 2019 and has swept throughout the globe. 20% of those who catch it will become sick enough to need hospital care. Anyone can catch or spread the virus. Those who are over 60 or have medical conditions -- diabetes, high blood pressure, heart or lung disease -- are at a higher risk to become much sicker and require hospitalization, intensive care and use of a ventilator. Even with good medical care, some 2-4% of those infected will die. COVID-19 will kill 10 times as many people as the seasonal flu.

**How can Rotarians use their leadership roles to save lives?** Suspend in-person Rotary Club meetings and activities now, even if your local authorities have not yet required it, demonstrating good practices to others.

**Your Club can post accurate information on social media, radio, and TV.** You can record and post short videos demonstrating the following essential points:

**1. Urge everyone to practice social distancing and 'stay at home'.**

Effective social distancing strategies to prevent transmission include:

- Staying at least two meters (6 feet) away from other people.
- Cancelling in-person gatherings, including worship.
- Working from home and using internet apps or conference calls for meetings.
- Closing schools or switching to online classes.
- Stopping visits to friends or family. Stay in touch by phone or internet.

**2. Wash hands thoroughly with soap several times a day for at least 20 seconds.**

Soap destroys the outer membrane of the virus and kills it. Clean surfaces that others touch, like doorknobs, with disinfectant or a soap and water solution.

**3. Teach people to cough or sneeze into their elbows.**

**4. Inform people of COVID-19 symptoms and what to do if they occur:** Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and sore throat. Ask what your local public health authorities recommend on what people should do if they develop symptoms, and broadcast that advice. This will vary depending on how far the virus has spread where you are, and the capacity of the local health care system, which may be changing rapidly in response to this crisis.

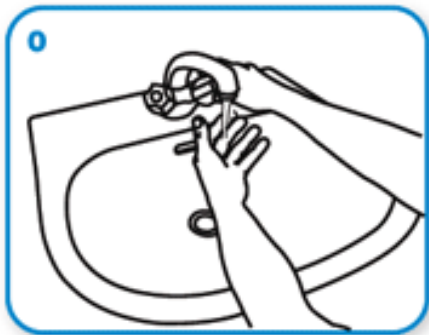
**5. Self-quarantine for 14 days** if you've just returned from an area where COVID-19 is present, or if you've been exposed to someone with symptoms or a positive test.

The [COVID-19 resource page](#) on ESRAG's website includes a number of suggestions on service projects Rotarians can carry out to help first responders and neighbors in need even while maintaining social distance. [Let us know](#) what you're doing, so we can share the news!

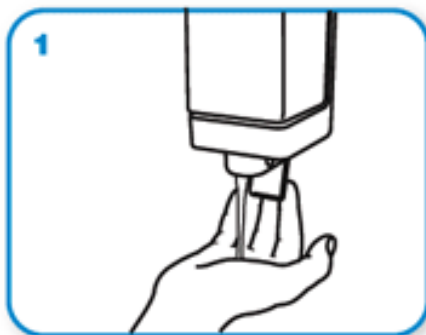
Here's a diagram from the [World Health Organization](#) on how to wash your hands properly. Someone from your Club could make and post a fun video demonstration, or post this [WHO video](#) that was shared by ESRAG. WHO says you should wash about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. Why not sing as you soap?







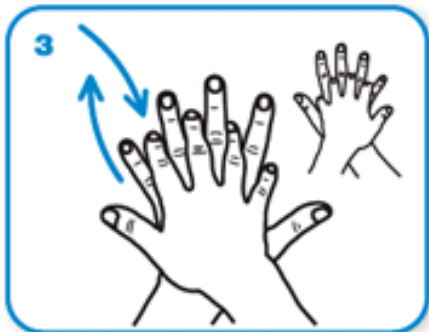
Wet hands with water



apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



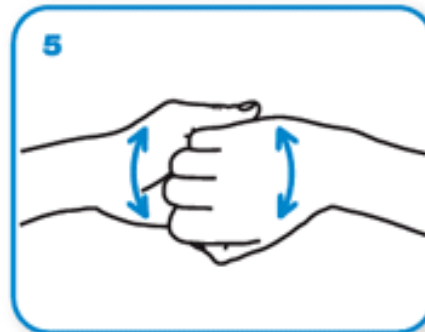
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



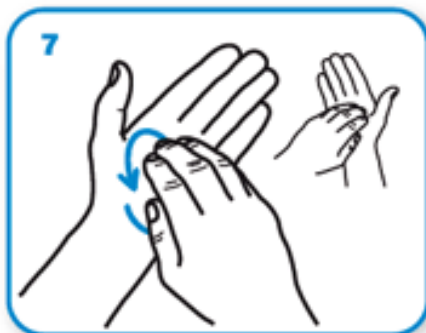
palm to palm with fingers interlaced



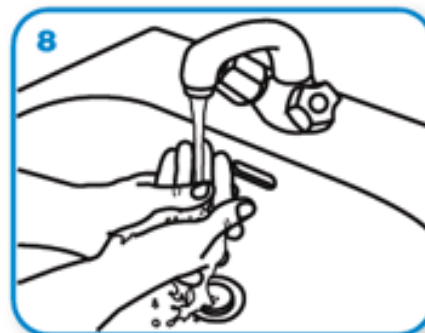
backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



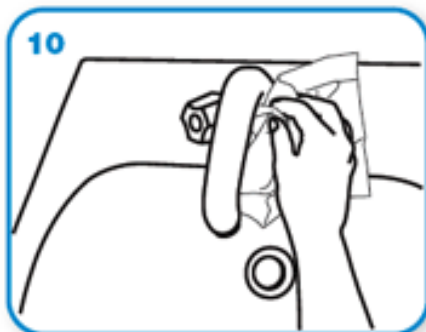
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single use towel

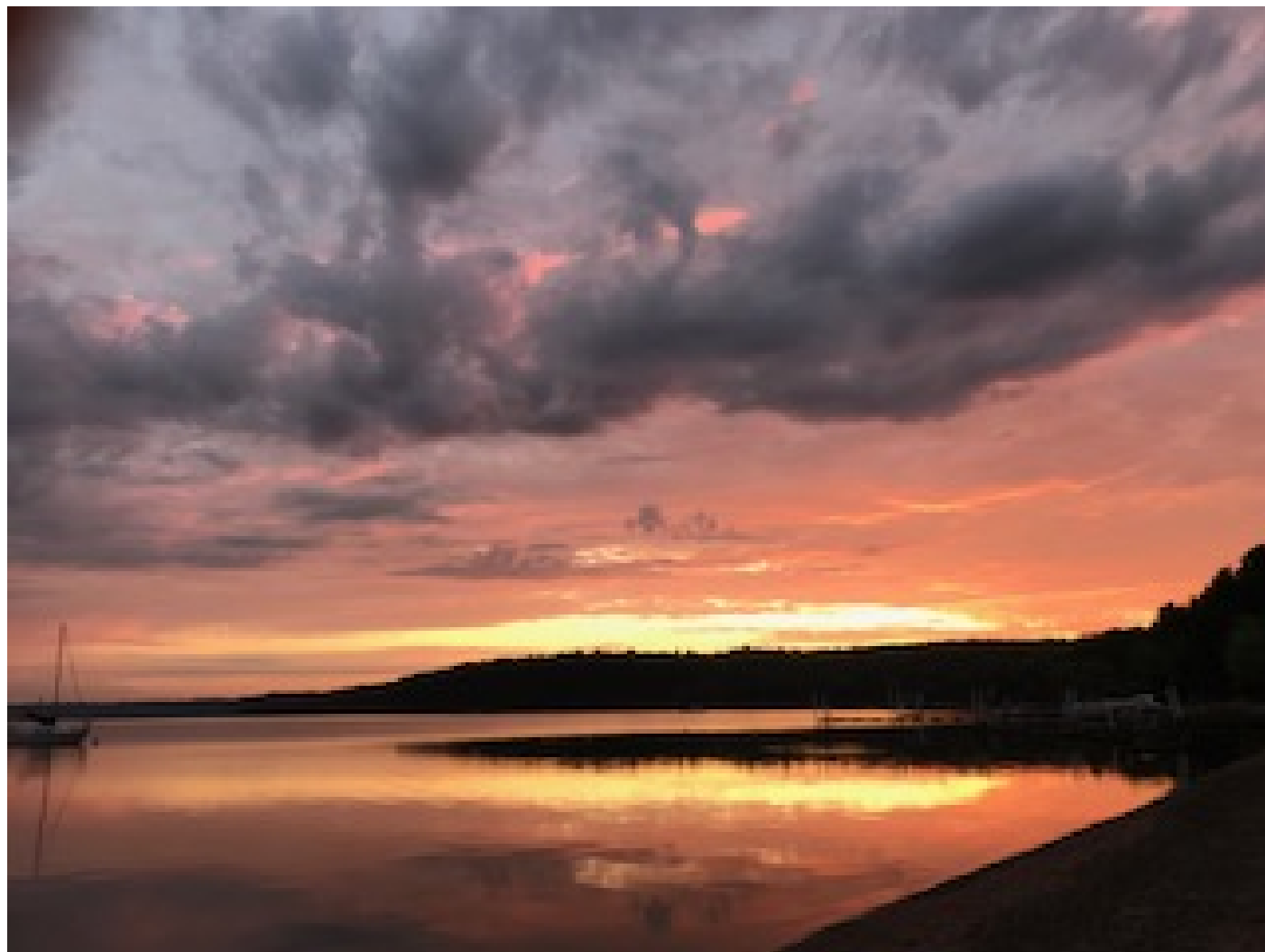


use towel to turn off faucet



...and your hands are safe.

## Being home in a time of crisis



*Sunrise over the St. Croix River, Wisconsin, USA, by Judith Freund*

**By Judith Freund, Ed.D. D.G. 2011-12, Rotary District 5960,  
Hudson, Wisconsin Daybreak Rotary Club (USA)**

As businesses shutter, churches close, and schools go online, we are told we need to be at home.

I watched the beautiful scene of Italian residents stand on their balconies and connect with their neighbors by creating joyful music. Nature, in both built environments and wild spaces, works the same joyful magic. When I think about moments I felt the presence of angels, every one of these involved a miracle of nature – including her most glorious of acts, birth.

I recall the spontaneous applause that erupted when viewers watched the sunrise over a mountain – an event that occurs every single day! People speak of a walk through Yosemite's Mariposa Grove looking up and out in silent awe at this marvelous act of Creation. It feels reminiscent of the moment that Sam, in *The Lord of the Rings*, looks out over a dark landscape and sees a twinkling from above. The beauty "smote his heart," J.R.R. Tolkien wrote. "A clear shaft pierced him. In the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach."

Friends have marveled at the opportunities to listen to nothing more than the silence filled by the dawn chorus of songbirds. Or they recall the return of butterflies whose sheer numbers are a reminder of the earth's abundance. In gardens, both urban and rural, we watch life cycle itself before our eyes and remember that we are connected to this miracle of nature. The natural environment can and does provide a "clear shaft".

I suspect that Edgar Mitchel – the sixth astronaut to walk on the moon – felt this returning to Earth in the Apollo capsule. As Mitchel gazed on our planet, he realized that we needed a new, grander language to speak of our connectedness, and to describe our potential as humans. I suspect Gaylord Nelson felt this as well when he conceived Earth Day fifty years ago.

We are Rotarians who understand, like Edgar Mitchel, that we are ready for a new language of potential. When we encourage children and their parents, or their grandparents, neighbors or friends, to take a walk in a city park or on a remote hillside; to behold the most marvelous of nature's glory, or the most common of occurrences; we know that instant provides a comforting reminder that life is bigger than any one moment in time.

Wherever you or any of us are, we are home.

*The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.*