

A Message From the AVA President Regarding the COVID-19 Virus.

The question has been raised if the AVA National Office was going to issue some type of "policy" with regard to the COVID-19 virus that is spreading around the world. The ED/CEO and I have discussed the situation and given that conditions are different in every community and every club, we believe that it is more appropriate for our clubs to look at their activities, meetings, members, and community in order to make decisions that best suit their conditions. However, with that in mind while I'm sure you have heard these numerous times, I would like to remind everyone of some of the commonsense things to consider.

1. **Recommend that clubs postpone all Traditional Events for the next 30 days.** Our membership is on the vulnerable side of this COVID-19, and we must fall on the side of safety of the most valuable part of our organization. our members. For those TEs that are postponed, we will allow the clubs to reschedule at a future date at no further cost. We encourage clubs to make such a decision to postpone or cancel at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled event. Clubs should follow the recommendations of their state or local health department and certainly consider the age of their participants.
2. *National Walking Week is 2 weeks away, and the Board will be discussing our options at its next Electronic Board Meeting on March 17. Once we have a plan in place, we will let the clubs know.*
3. Experts agree that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. Use common sense in scheduling club activities. Personal contact should likely be restricted. No one is going to be offended today if you don't shake hands. Our events are typically outside which pretty much allows considerable social separation during the event except at the Start and Finish. Using antiseptic to clean off the Start Table and the pens might be prudent. Better yet, encourage club members to use their own pens. Handling money becomes problematic; so, consider using rubber gloves or ensuring the person handling the money liberally uses hand sanitizer. If restrooms are available, encourage handwashing after registration or provide hand sanitizer, if available. Club meetings are usually inside which means having to consider if you want to delay or skip a meeting for a time.
4. Individually, we all can help break the infection chain by some simple steps. First and foremost, if you feel sick or know you have been exposed, stay home. Be willing to miss a meeting or event until you know you are healthy. Err on the side of not passing something on to others. Be diligent about washing your hands. We are told to use soap and water for at least 20 seconds. I'm told that you can hum "Happy Birthday" twice (if you don't hurry it) to get that 20 seconds. Likewise, use hand sanitizer when washing might not be convenient, like right after you have handled the hose while pumping gas. Use a tissue on doorknobs and elevator buttons, but then be careful that you dispose of the tissue. Since we are told you might have the virus and be able to spread it even though you aren't showing symptoms, be sure to cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Keep your hands away from your face. Touch something contaminated and then touch your face is a quick way to pick up an infection.
5. Maintain your personal health by eating right, drinking plenty of liquids, exercising, appropriate social interaction, and getting sufficient sleep. Try not to worry as worry can affect your health as well.

Stay well! We will all get through this.

Happy trails,
David Bonewitz, PhD
President

AVA: America's Walking Club