

No Visitors Allowed

Category: COVID-19, Chapter 2
written by Deborah Levin | May 4, 2020

His voice was serious and stern. "You can't visit, mom," my son said. "I'm a vector." In fact, he's a doctor working at a big-city hospital, and while not on the immediate front lines in terms of direct contact with COVID-19 patients, he is very involved in the logistics related to the ventilators in the ICUs. Walking the common halls and entering the secure isolation areas daily puts him at risk not only for contracting the virus himself but also for transmitting it unknowingly. He could be asymptomatic but test positive for the virus. He absolutely would not consider putting his seventy-year-old parents in danger.

So... no visiting. Not him, not his wife, not his two teenaged children.

My daughter approached the situation a little less scientifically. "What are you crazy, mom?" she yelled into the phone one day. "You can't get on a plane now!" Well, okay, that settles that. No visiting her, either. Unless... "Rent an RV," she texted a few minutes later. "Start driving." Three thousand miles? I don't think so.

In March, the onset of the pandemic created confusion and fear. How far could this spread? How fast? April saw hospital admissions soar and restrictions imposed. New York was put on *Pause*. California ordered *Shelter in Place*. City streets looked like ghost towns. Businesses closed. Airlines were flying half-empty. Zoom became a household word, FaceTime a routine. Masks were made mandatory, and I started sewing in a frenzy for family and friends. What next?

Contact tracing, convalescent plasma collection, antibody tests. If your blood shows evidence of antibodies to the virus, you're safe. Or are you? Many health officials and scientists are weighing in, but opinions vary. This virus is too new to have any evidenced-based data to corroborate or disprove that theory. Everything, it seems, is an educated guess.

And now in the new month of May, the country is going in different directions. While some states are standing firm and taking vigilant precautions, others are easing up, even as warnings about a second wave echo across the continent. The flattened curve could peak again.

I can't get comfortable with this "new normal" defining our lives. I want the old normal back. I want to be able to drive a car or board a plane to celebrate a family birthday. I want to hug my children and grandchildren. I want to flip the sign on my door to say, "Visitors Welcome."

Deborah Levin
Mt. Kisco, New York