As naturally communal people, we depend on each other to survive. COVID-19 has challenged us all to ask the question, “how do we count on each other without risking our safety and the safety of our loved ones?”. We love our families, but we want us all to live. We NEED to live. The only way to ensure this happens is by stopping the spread of COVID-19. As we near the year mark of COVID-19, we reflect and honor the community members we’ve lost while recognizing the COVID-19 misconceptions we must fight to keep us all healthy and well.

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**MYTH:** A negative test means it’s fine to hang out with family, go to church and travel, etc.

**FACT:** A negative test is just a picture in time: it means the virus was not active in your body (or there wasn’t enough virus present yet at the time of the test). It does not mean you’re immune or that you haven’t been infected in the time since the test. ¹

A big misconception in the Black community is that a negative COVID-19 test gives you the license to hang out with other folks. Another challenging myth is if you are at gatherings and people are not exhibiting symptoms, you don’t need to wear a mask or social distance. There are several misconceptions linked to the meaning of being asymptomatic. Asymptomatic means that you have the virus and are spreading it, but there are no visible signs of the individual being infected. Just because someone seems well doesn’t mean that they are.

**MYTH:** Face masks replace the need for social distancing.

**FACT:** Face masks reduce but do not cut the possibility of virus transfer, so you still need distance. There are several reasons for this:

- Not everyone wears a mask (Remember: Your face-covering protects others, and their mask protects you),
- Not everyone wears one correctly (it needs to cover the mouth AND the nose completely),
- Non-medical-grade masks aren’t going to catch all respiratory droplets.²

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² Ibid.
"In retrospect, what I wish I knew prior to getting COVID-19 was that I would not really be able to take care of myself. My experience was very challenging because I was not around help and truly struggled to help myself. I had to rely on people in my community to ship me things and figure out the rest on my own. My body was very weak, I had a lot of breathing issues, it was hard to stand and I no energy at all. My family had to fly in to take me to the ER. COVID is very serious. People believe either you die from it or you're asymptomatic. Not true- there's an in-between that's very painful and uncomfortable. There's an in-between area where maybe you won't die but you can still feel the severity of it, we have to be mindful and careful in our day-to-day lives."

MYTH: COVID-19 is like the flu, if I get it I will be okay.

FACT: Both the flu and COVID-19 spread from person to person through droplets in the air from an infected person coughing, sneezing, or talking. But some major differences make COVID-19 more likely to spread and cause more severe illness. The death rate for COVID-19 is anywhere from 4 to 15 times higher than the seasonal flu, which only has a mortality rate of .1%

• COVID-19 is not like the flu, we put everyone in danger when we don’t take this seriously.

MYTH: I feel fine. I don’t have COVID-19 and can’t give it to anyone.

FACT: COVID-19 research shows about 20% of people infected with the virus remain symptom-free. Asymptomatic people can spread the virus. While you may feel fine and go about your daily life, you could be giving the virus to friends, family members, and strangers without knowing you're infected. Your family members and friends with underlying health conditions are at greater risk, which would make it harder for their bodies to fight off the virus. Even if you think you are invincible, it is important for you to know and understand that your loved ones and circle of friends may not be.

Cerise Hunt, PhD, MSW, is the Director for the Center for Public Health Practice, Associate Dean of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and Assistant Professor in the Department of Community and Behavioral Health at Colorado School of Public Health University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She is responsible for the formation of community linkages that guide public health practice, provision of continuing education and workforce development opportunities in public health, and engagement in public health practice research. Cerise was instrumental in the formation of the Colorado Black Health Collaborative.

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**STATE YOUR DEMANDS**

**HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF IN THIS TIME!**

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**QUESTION & ANSWER!**

**QUESTION:**
What advice do you have for your community about navigating COVID-19?

**ANSWER:**
We have to take the public health precautions and guidelines seriously. As a community we must take it seriously, it’s no joke.

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**QUESTION:**
How can we find empowerment during this time?

**ANSWER:**
As a community that cannot connect during this time, we should be tapping into our social networks whether it’s Facebook or virtual events. We have to stay connected to our community.

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**QUESTION:**
What are the key questions we can ask if we feel like we’re not being heard by doctors?

**ANSWER:**
Are you listening to me? Wait for a response. Follow up question, what did I say?
Mrs. Thelma Craig is one of the co-founders and current Chair for Colorado Black Health Collaborative (CBHC). CBHC’s mission is to achieve health equity for the Black community in Colorado. She has over 25 years of experience in serving in community organizations as a health educator and public speaker and over 30 years in the public health sector as a Disease Control Specialist and Research Analyst.

Even with a negative test result, we still have a duty to protect ourselves and those we love. Wear a mask. Social distance at least 6 feet from anyone you don’t live with, wash your hands often, and clean and disinfect touched surfaces daily. Avoid large gatherings, unnecessary travel, and use extreme caution even in small gatherings.

Insight From Mrs. Thelma Craig!

One of the initial biggest misconceptions in the Black community was through social media memes or messages saying that Black people couldn’t get COVID-19. One of the later misconceptions was that COVID-19 testing wasn’t free. It’s essential that we in the Black community reach out to community-based organizations that provide accurate information and education. It’s important to know where you can get free testing from and what symptoms you should recognize before calling a healthcare provider. Reach out to trusted care providers and community-based orgs that employ people of color as care providers. Colorado Black Health Collaborative response team educators, the CDC website, Colorado.gov, and the Center for African American Health are all great resources.

Small gatherings are not “safe,” either — you can get the virus during a small gathering as you can at a large one. It’s best to use face masks and social distancing with anyone you don’t live with.

Resource Guide

- Access Colorado Black Health Collaborative’s Events and Resources at https://coloradoblackhealth.org/
- #ClearTheAir (http://cleartheair4.us) is providing toolkits for workers and employers on how to reduce the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 through the air at work or home. Toolkits are also available in Spanish.