

So you want things opened back up?

We can safely open businesses and society back up quickly and safely. Just as soon as we get a few things ready. We really only needed a shut down for about three weeks to get things ready, and even that was only necessary because we failed to get ready early on.

Here are six easy steps:

One: We need to be able to test everyone that has any symptoms and as well, as any of their close contacts. This is basic public health practice that has been done to stop the spread of infectious disease at least since the 1950's. We need to be able to test and trace contacts and quarantine and care for those people until the risk of them spreading the disease has passed.

Two: Medical personnel, police, cashiers and other people serving the public need personal protective equipment. This is simple basic stuff.

Three: We need to give personal protective masks and safety glasses to everyone so that they can go out and not be at risk of getting or spreading the disease, and then mandate their appropriate use. This has worked to prevent disease where it is done in other countries. Masks are not perfect, but when used correctly can be as effective as vaccines in preventing the spread of disease. It should cost less than \$10 per person to supply two washable masks so people have one to use every other day while the other is washed and dried, and a pair of safety glasses. This is cheap and effective protection and disease prevention.

Four: We need to figure out which medications help keep people from dying. Every hospitalized case of COVID-19 should be part of a treatment trial so we can learn as quickly as possible what works and what does not. Once there is effective treatment, the disease will not be such a danger.

Five: We need to inform the public how to lower their risk of severe illness if they catch the infection. This is simple stuff- getting plenty of sleep, low dose zinc (10 mg daily) and low dose vitamin D3 (400 IU daily). It is not perfect, but if it lowers risk by even 5%, it will lower the number of those who need hospitalization.

Six: We need to be able to do IgG testing on every one who thinks they have already had the infection, and if they prove to have immunity, give them an ID card that shows they can go out without a mask and not be a danger to themselves or others. These tests cost about \$25 (wholesale). Proof of immunity would allow people to travel and return to the U.S. Perhaps one in six New Yorkers is already immune, as more than half of young people have asymptomatic or very mild disease.

The U.S. has shutdown schools, restaurants, parks, beauty salons and barbers and numerous other businesses. Most of the population of the U.S. is staying home and limiting contact. But this has not been not enough. The R_0 (reproductive rate) remains at about 1.0 – after about 6 weeks, the number of new cases is flat, not disappearing as we had hoped. We run the risk of exponential growth if we return to business as before. If we do not do these additional measures, we will not be able to reopen without dire consequences.

All these measures are simple and straight forward. It should only take a few weeks to get them done. At least four of these could have been done in February. Five of them could have been done in March. They could all have been done in April. The only real question is – whether or not there is the leadership to get them done.

Schools are another topic, for another letter.