

Head Of Florida Academy Of Family Physicians: Stay Home If Possible; Wear A Mask Outside

By [BILL BORTZFIELD \(/PEOPLE/BILL-BORTZFIELD\)](#) • 21 HOURS AGO

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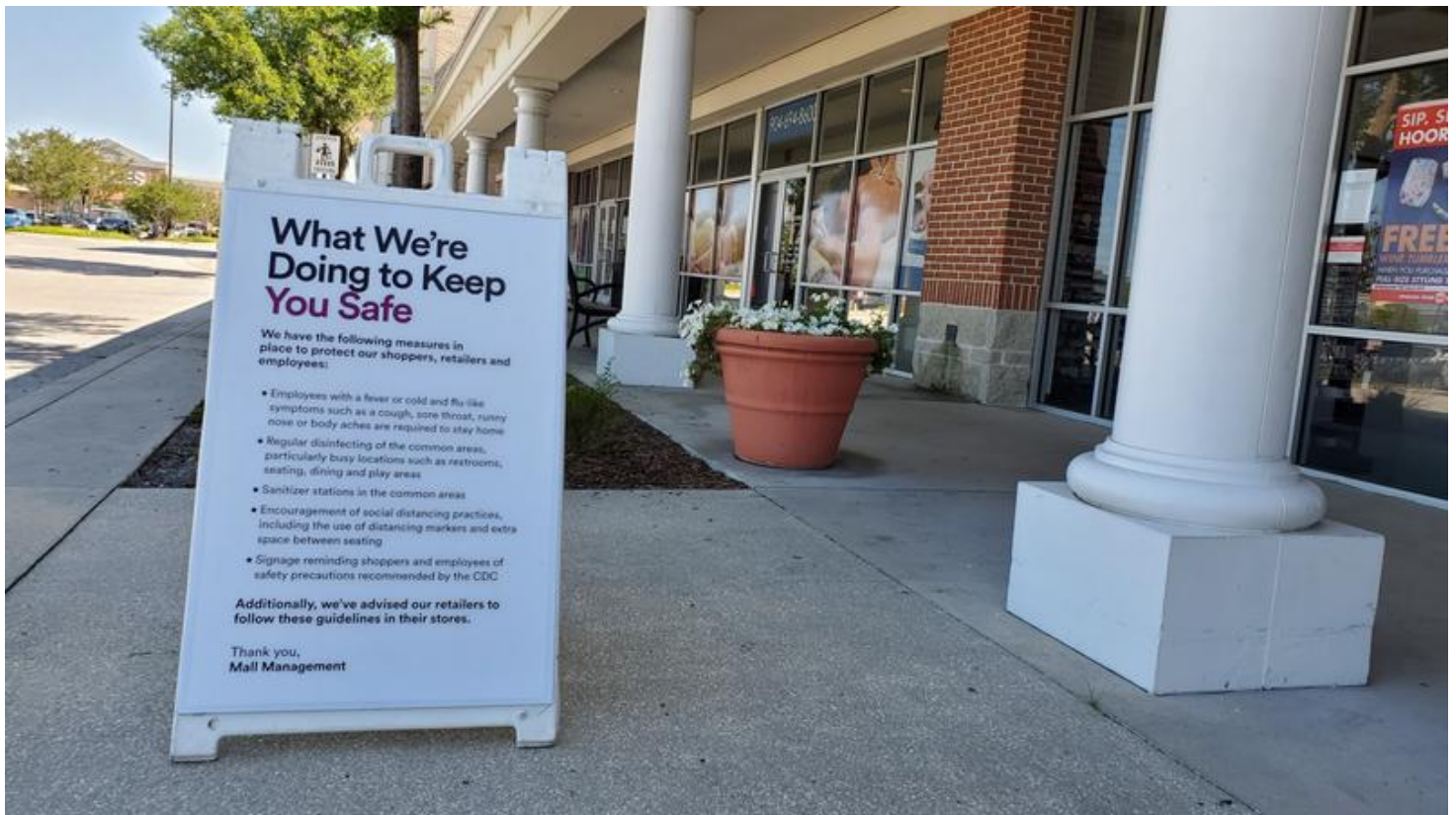
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Signs greet shoppers at the St. Johns Town Center, encouraging them to keep socially distant.

BILL BORTZFIELD / WJCT NEWS

As Jacksonville and Florida relax restrictions meant to keep people at home, some area doctors are warning against heading back to work or shopping right away.

“The big message is to please, please, please, continue to stay home,” said Dr. Christie Alexander, who is president of the Florida Academy of Family Physicians.

Appearing on *First Coast Connect with Melissa Ross* (<https://news.wjct.org/post/staying-safe-florida-reopens-hro-servepro-giving-tuesday-now>) Tuesday, Alexander implored those who must go outside to wear a mask.

“It not only protects you, but it protects those around you,” she said.

Alexander is also a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Rural Health at Florida State University’s College of Medicine.

She’s very concerned that businesses are already reopening and people are starting to mingle again.

Related: Local, State, And National Coronavirus Coverage (<https://wjct.org/coronavirus/>)

“Until we do more testing and include contact tracing and things like that, we just don't know where we stand. So opening up now and making it seem like everything's okay, to some extent, it's just not true,” she said.

Gov. Ron DeSantis has repeatedly said contract tracing is part of the Florida Department of Health's strategy to keep coronavirus in check, but there's evidence the contract tracing may not be comprehensive, according to the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (<https://www.sun->

sentinel.com/coronavirus/fl-ne-coronavirus-florida-contact-tracers-20200501-lia52oe45neefdohf7d6samxjq-story.html).

Dr. Alexander said people have to realize there is “no treatment, no vaccine.”

She compared COVID-19 to hurricanes, saying that Florida is living in a cone of uncertainty. Alexander is encouraging people to avoid dining in at restaurants, if possible, even as dining rooms are now allowed to operate at 25% capacity and outdoor seating can be arranged 6 feet apart.

“If you're trying to support your local restaurants, do a curbside thing, a pickup thing, or have it delivered and then you can clean everything off before you bring it into the house, something like that,” she said.

She also wants people to think about "social distancing" a little differently.

“‘Physically distance.’ I like that wording better than ‘socially distance’ because it better explains what we're doing as much as possible,” she said.

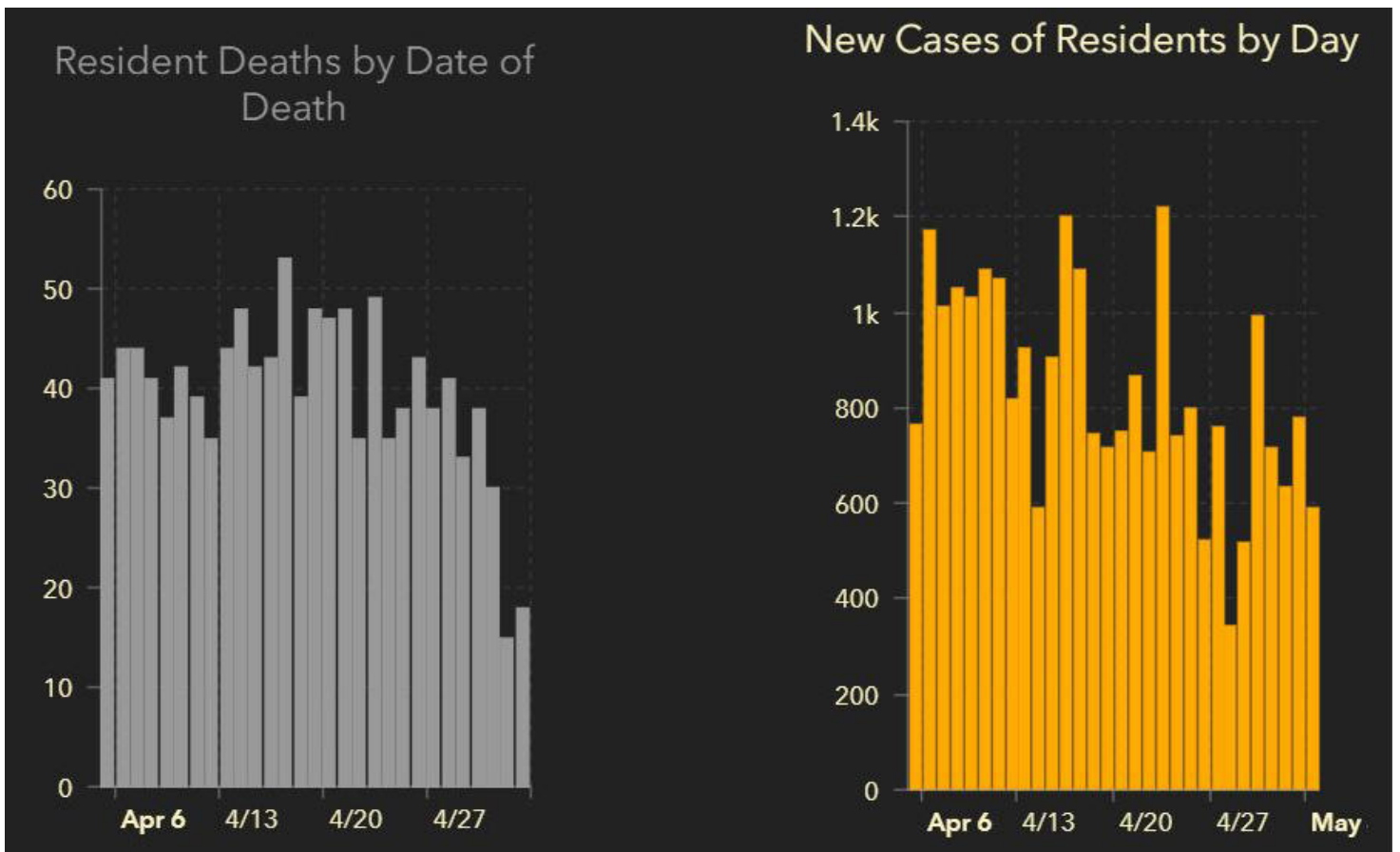
Alexander pointed out how hard it is to actually maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from people when going into many public spaces.

Related: Listen to the full interview with Alexander (<https://news.wjct.org/post/staying-safe-florida-reopens-hro-servepro-giving-tuesday-now>)

“It is tough every time I go to the grocery store. There's no way that's happening,” she said.

And what about those experiencing symptoms? Alexander said don't automatically head out to see your doctor.

“Most offices can handle things by the phone at this point and put in orders for COVID testing if needed. That's been a big push, is to keep people safe, is to call before you come in,” said Alexander.



(https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wjct/files/styles/x_large/public/202005/COVID0505stats.jpg)

This May 4, 2020 Florida Department of Health chart illustrates the COVID-19 statewide trend.

CREDIT FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

At the time of this story's publication, there had been 1,471 COVID-19 deaths in Florida and 37,439 total cases. In Duval County, 26 people have died, with 1,084 cases reported.

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