

Navigating the Pandemic

V'Chai BaHem

“And you shall live by them”

Synagogue Council of Massachusetts

Issues in Light of COVID-19

May 26, 2020



Panelists

- Ethan Mascoop, MPH, MUA, RS
- Bruce Weinstock, MD, MPH
- Jonathan Slutzman, MD
- Wendy Heiger-Bernays, PhD

Objectives

- Describe knowns and unknowns about health risks;
- Discuss state and other guidance;
- Identify strategies to decrease risk of infection in places of worship;
- Respond to questions.

Why did Synagogues Close?

State mandated closure to:

- Prevent public exposure to virus
- Protect the medical system

PLACES OF WORSHIP

MA Safety Standards



<https://www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-places-of-worship>



Two Major Tensions –

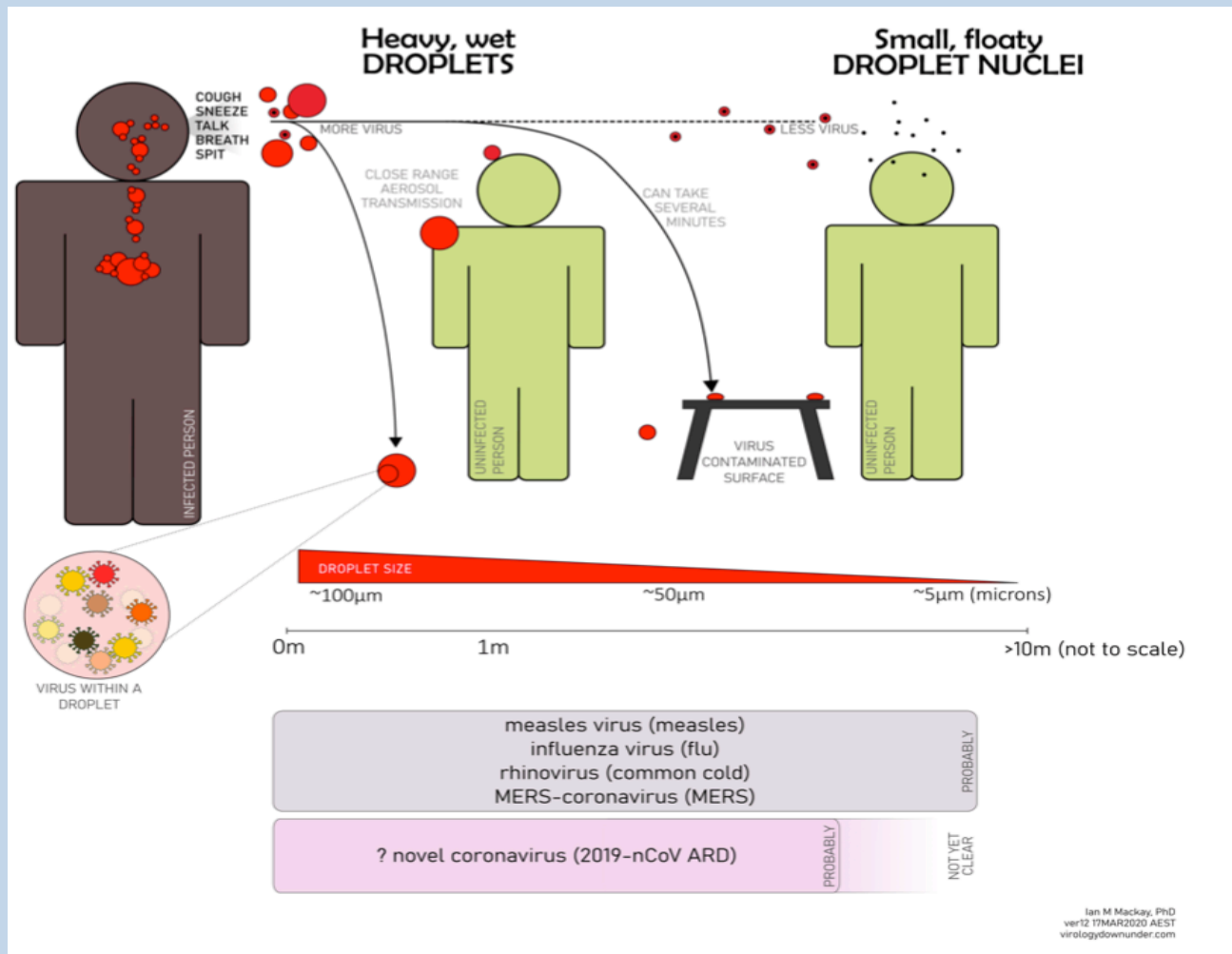
1) *Kavod Hatzibbur* – Respecting the quality of life for the community

2) *Pikuach Nefesh* – Saving a life

What is Known About COVID-19?

Disease is caused by virus (SARS-CoV-2)

Virus is spread by respiratory droplets





The virus spreads mainly person-to-person

- Between people who are within 6 feet
- Through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or sings
- Droplets land in mouths or noses of people nearby
- Contact with surfaces where droplets have “landed”

**Disease may be spread by people
NOT SHOWING SYMPTOMS**

COVID-19

- People > 60-65 and those with underlying conditions (immunocompromised, diabetes, asthma, COPD, other) are vulnerable to severe_disease
- No vaccine
- No treatment
- No known immunity
- Antibody testing not yet reliable

Risks

- **Exposure to the virus**
- Getting infected with virus
- Getting sick with virus
- Spreading virus to others in our synagogues
- Spreading virus to the larger community
- Spreading virus to vulnerable people
- Prolonged severe illness
- Death
- Synagogue legal liability

WHEN SYNAGOGUES RE-OPEN

- **BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER, MORE EXPOSURE TO THE VIRUS;**
- ALL MODELS ARE UNCERTAIN AND ALL SHOW INCREASE RISK OF INFECTION

DECREASE EXPOSURE TO VIRUS!!!

Assume all congregants are infectious

How to decrease exposure?



Exposure to virus = # people: distance : time

Numbers
(people)

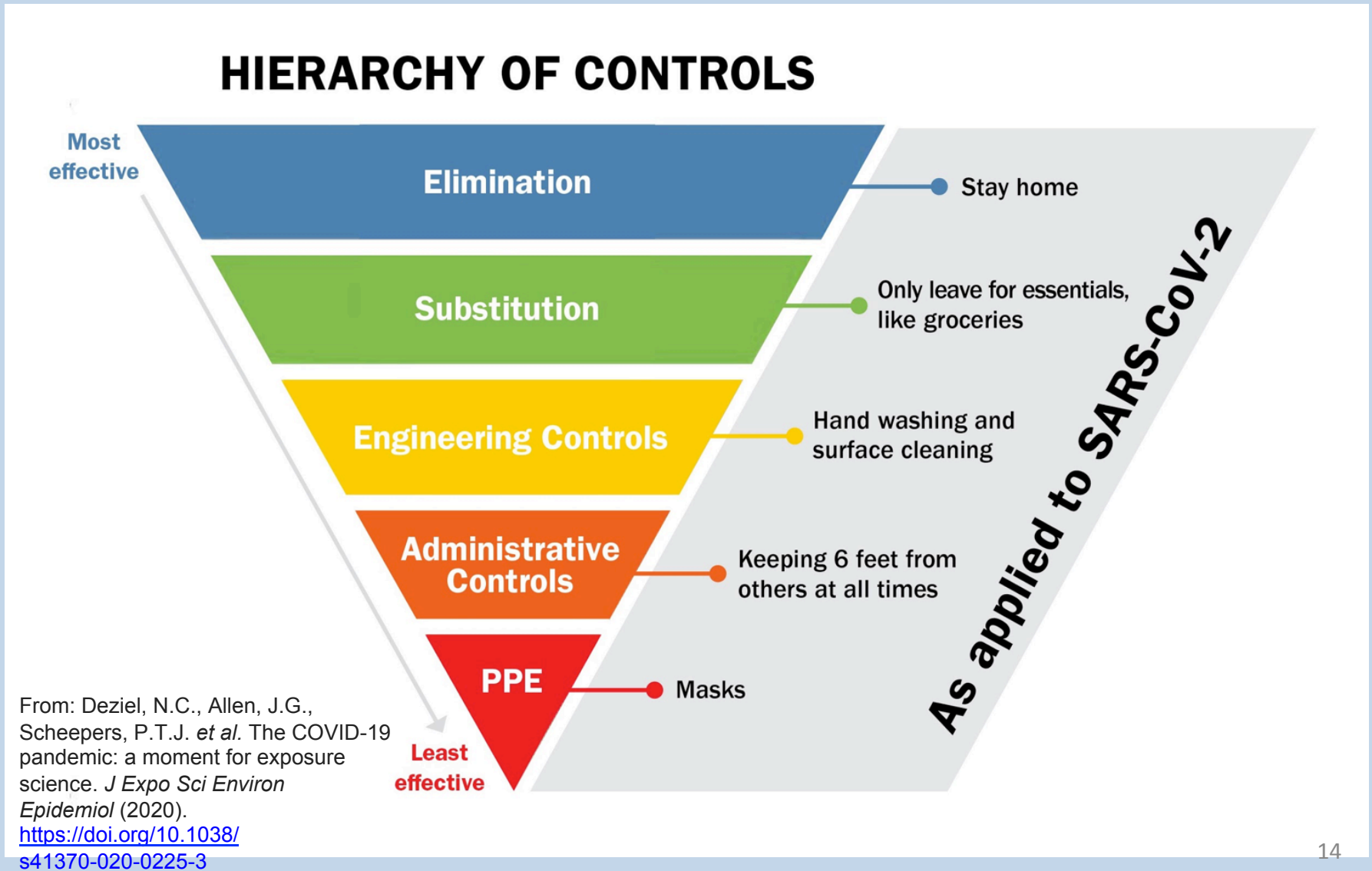
COVID-19

Distance
6 ft
minimum

Time



How to decrease exposure to the virus?

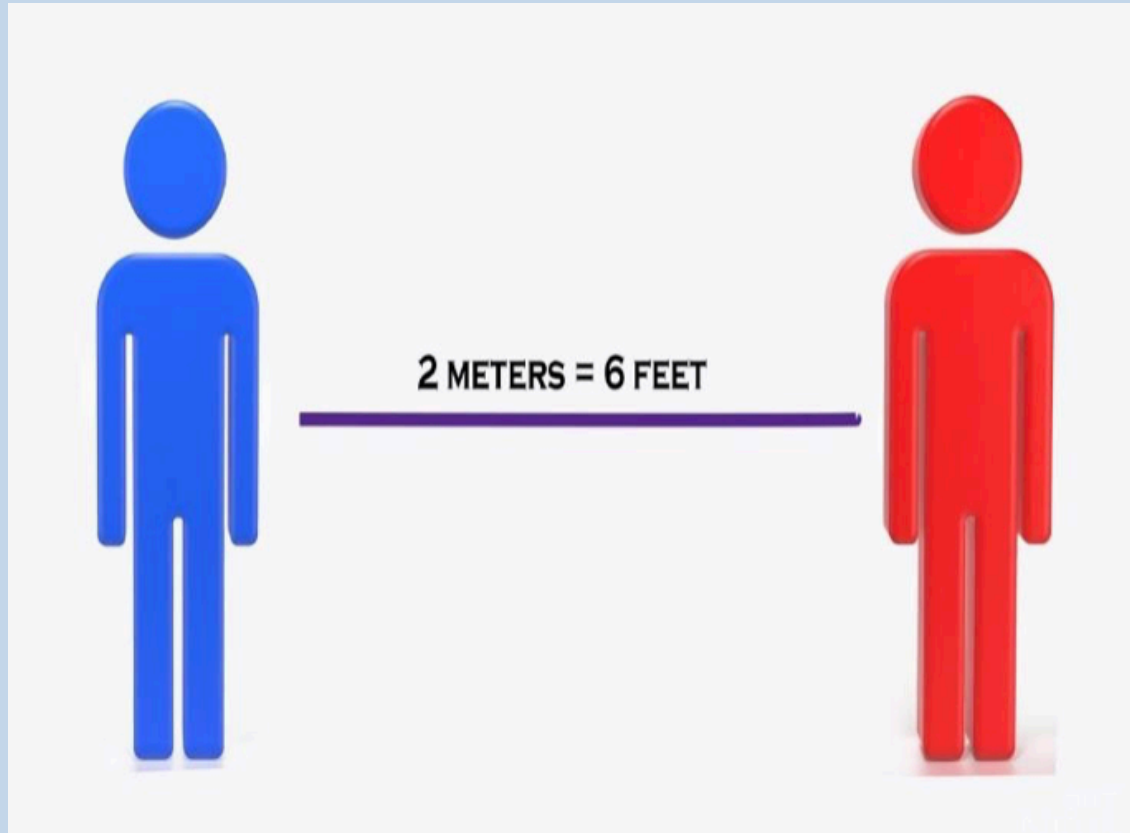


Recommend Masks/Face Coverings



Do not recommend gloves & temperature screening

Social Distancing



Cleaning & Disinfection

- Cleaning (removes dirt)
- Disinfection (kills viruses – need contact time)
- Frequency – after each use, daily?
- Wear protective gear
- Well ventilated space
- Proper use of chemicals – Safety Data Sheets
- **Read the label**

Adequate Building Ventilation

- Air exchange to decrease viral particles in air;
- Prolonged shutdown or reduced use?
Standing water (Legionella and mold)
- Upgrade and Maintenance – air flues, dampers, filters, etc.

Know your system!!!

What do we need to do?
What can we do?

PLACES OF WORSHIP

MA Safety Standards



Mandatory MA Safety Standards

1. **40% of space maximum occupancy.**
2. Distance – 6 feet separation.
3. Face coverings
4. Handwashing Facilities – access to all.
5. No communal gathering pre or post service – no food service.
6. **Childcare prohibited.**
7. Cleaning and disinfecting.
8. **Must cooperate with BOH with contact tracing – COVID-19 positive in attendance**



Recommended

- **Online sign-up for services to monitor and limit number of attendees.**
- Place tape or other visual distancing markings for distancing.
- Promote ventilation – open windows and doors to allow airflow.
- Encourage orderly entering and exiting
 - Staff be present to monitor high traffic areas and encourage social distancing.
 - Staff direct successive row-by-row exiting.

Synagogue Responsibility

- Follow the mandated responsibilities outlined by the state
- Enable **efficient contact tracing**
- Prevent illness and death to members
- Prevent excessive spread to community
- **Protect large numbers of congregants from having to quarantine for 14-21 days**
- Inclusivity (or excluding vulnerable)



Our Recommendations

- Create an advisory committee;
- Transparent, frequent communications;
- Record keeping (who attends, maintenance of interventions);
- Security

Considerations

- Plan for a range of possibilities
- Expect imperfect compliance or adherence by members and account for this (“Make a Fence”)

Final Notes

- Science: Some things known, some suspected but not proven, some not yet known, more info yet to come.
- We are building the plane as we fly it. We have no choice.
- Follow state standards as minimum
- Consider your core missions and responsibilities and develop a plan addressing your values.
- Share knowledge and resources

When will we know if we can have normal High Holiday services?

- According to Dr. Fauci – Likelihood that we can be with large numbers together in one space by Rosh Hashanah this year entirely depends on ability of the government to have reliable testing with good contact tracing and isolation plans and community virus to be relatively low. It is highly unlikely we will know by Mid July if the government can or cannot accomplish this by Rosh Hashanah in Mid September. We will probably know by mid August.

[-https://www.ou.org/ou-conversation-with-dr-fauci/](https://www.ou.org/ou-conversation-with-dr-fauci/)

Resources

Synagogue Council Resource page

<https://www.synagoguecouncil.org/>

Your questions

Thank you