Media coverage of COVID-19 often includes the phrase “flattening the curve.” Dr. Clayton Cowl, chair of Mayo Clinic’s Division of Preventive, Occupational and Aerospace Medicine, says the phrase refers to an attempt to stop a spike in the number of new cases.

"When we refer to the term, 'flattening, or bending, the curve,' we're talking about preventing a sudden influx of new cases," says Dr. Cowl. "And by keeping those numbers down, we can avoid severe illnesses, deaths and overloading the supply system."

Flattening The Curve Helps Maintain Resources

"For the individuals who develop severe disease, we want to make sure to have adequate supplies—adequate numbers of gowns and masks for our health care providers—to take care of them so they don't get the illness," says Dr. Cowl. "They need adequate amounts of supplemental oxygen, IV lines, ventilators and things like that."

©2020 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.