

A physician's guide to COVID-19

A quick-start physician guide to COVID-19, curated from comprehensive CDC, JAMA and WHO resources, that will help prepare your practice, address patient concerns and answer your most pressing questions.

Prepare your practice or health system for COVID-19

Steps health care facilities can take now to prepare

1. Stay informed about the spread of COVID-19 and develop a plan to manage an outbreak at both the system and community level
2. Communicate your COVID-19 updates and details about your preparedness plan with both staff and patients
3. Set up screening measures and guidance on using personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep your workforce healthy
4. Take measures to keep "Persons Under Investigation" (PUI) and others with suspected COVID-19 symptoms separate from the rest of your patients

Get [CDC resources for health care facilities](#).

Steps practices can take to overcome the new and unique operation challenges of COVID-19

1. Create a designated response team and develop a process for rapid decision-making and planning
2. Learn how your business insurance policy will/will not provide coverage for COVID-19 related liabilities
3. Evaluate ongoing financial obligations and develop contingency plans to ensure ongoing liquidity in the event of reduced revenue
4. Assess current and future supply needs to ensure that you are in queue to receive any essential medical supplies
5. Postpone elective or non-urgent procedures and develop a plan to continue seeing patients remotely
6. Implement COVID-19 specific clinical protocols and prepare to handle for exposure incidents

Read more [practice advice](#).

How to protect yourself and your employees from the effects of COVID-19

Mental health resources for physicians and other frontline health care staff

The extreme stress and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic requires special attention to the needs of health care personnel (HCP). Self-care, social support and science-based information are critical for the mental well-being of health care workers.

Read detailed advice on maintaining well-being from [the AMA](#) and the [Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress](#).

How to minimize exposure and implement standard and transmission-based precautions

The CDC recommends specific measures to minimize the spread of infection that include:

1. Following PPE guidelines
2. Actively screening everyone for symptoms of COVID-19 before they enter your practice or health care facility
3. Implementing comprehensive source control for all, regardless of symptoms, to prevent transmission from asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic individuals (Note: cloth masks may be appropriate for patients or visitors in this setting, but they should **not** be considered appropriate workforce PPE.)
4. Foregoing contact tracing for exposures in favor of universal source control for HCP and screening for fever and symptoms before every shift in areas with heightened community transmission
5. Establish reporting within health care facilities and to public health authorities

Read the full [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#) and the [Strategies for Optimizing PPE](#)

Prioritizing urgent and emergency visits can help manage the supply of PPE

The following actions can preserve protective equipment and patient care supplies, ensure staff and patient safety, and expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Delay all elective ambulatory provider visits
- Reschedule elective and non-urgent admissions
- Delay inpatient and outpatient elective surgical and procedural cases
- Urge patients to postpone routine dental and eyecare visits

Read the full CDC information on optimizing the [supply of N95 respirators](#) and [CMS recommendations](#) on non-essential planned surgeries and procedures.

Diagnosing and treating patients with COVID-19

Who should be tested for COVID-19 and how to get them tested

Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). Physicians should be aware that state and local health departments may adapt recommended testing guidelines to respond to rapidly changing local circumstances.

Read the most recent [COVID-19 clinical criteria, which includes information on prioritizing testing](#).

Health care professionals should immediately notify their local or state health department in the event of a PUI for COVID-19. Find your [state](#) and [local](#) health department contacts.

What evidence-based therapeutic options are available for patients

There are no U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved drugs specifically for the treatment of patients with COVID-19.

Some patients with COVID-19 have received intravenous remdesivir, an investigational antiviral drug that was reported to have in-vitro activity against SARS-CoV-2, for compassionate use outside of a clinical trial setting.

Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are under investigation in clinical trials for pre-exposure or post-exposure prophylaxis of SARS-CoV-2 infection, and treatment of patients with mild to severe COVID-19. More information on clinical trials can be found at [ClinicalTrials.gov](#).

Read [clinical guidance from the CDC](#) as well as information on [therapeutic options](#) for COVID-19 patients.

If an adverse drug event is suspected or observed from any medication used to prevent or treat COVID-19, health care providers should submit a report to [FDA MedWatch](#) with COVID-19 or coronavirus referenced in the report.

Precautions to take for vulnerable patients

As COVID-19 is spread by person-to-person contact, limiting the impact of the virus on vulnerable patient populations, such as older adults and individuals with serious underlying medical conditions, may require specialized prevention measures.

Read current advice on [people at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19](#).

When to end home isolation for patients with COVID-19

Physicians now have two methods to determine the appropriateness of ending isolation. Options now include both a test-based strategy and a time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery (non-test-based) strategy.

Read the full [CDC interim guidance](#). There is separate [guidance](#) for individuals who are immunocompromised.

What to do if you have been exposed to patients with COVID-19

How to assess of risk, monitor for symptoms and understand work restriction decisions for health care professionals with potential exposure to COVID-19.

Health care professionals are at risk for exposure to COVID-19, whether in the workplace or in the community. The CDC recommends that facilities develop a plan to screen for symptoms and evaluate ill health care professionals. The guidance also outlines the appropriate implementation of work restrictions based on risk assessment, with recognition that this guidance is not practical in all situations.

Read [Interim guidance for health care personnel from the CDC](#)

How to communicate with patients

COVID-19 facts to share with concerned patients

Sharing facts on how the virus is spread and how to minimize exposure can help calm patient fears and prevent them from falling for popular myths.

[Explore CDC fact sheets and posters](#)

[Read myths about COVID-19](#) that physicians should be ready to debunk

Stay up-to-date on current [travel notices and restrictions from the CDC](#)

Advice to give patients who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19

Patients experiencing a fever, cough or other symptoms of respiratory illness that are common with COVID-19 should stay home except to get medical care. Most patients with mild illness are able to recover at home. but should seek treatment immediately if should they experience emergency warning signs.

Read more [tips from CDC to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)

Coverage and benefits policies related to COVID-19

Learn what coverage options are available through CMS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued a new frequently asked questions guide regarding coverage and payment for laboratory tests and other services related to COVID-19.

[Read the CMS Medicare FAQ](#)

[Read the CMS Medicaid FAQ](#)

[Information related to COVID-19 individual and small group market insurance coverage](#)

Explore your CARES Act options

The \$2 trillion CARES Act contains numerous provisions designed to preserve the livelihood of physicians and mitigating the economic damage suffered by American practices, hospitals and other health care organizations.

Learn more about [CARES Act benefits and provisions for physicians and practices](#).

Caring for patients through telehealth

Develop a telehealth plan

The temporary relaxation of regulatory requirements under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), physicians will find it easier to quickly scale up their digital health offers to continue care for patients in quarantine or isolation.

Read the [AMA's quick start guide to telemedicine](#) to start implementing digital tools in your practice.

Explore the [CMS Medicare Health Care Provider Fact Sheet for Telemedicine](#).