# 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.

## How to protect yourself from infection

### 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. Proper use of PPE, including eye protection
2. Take precautions when performing aerosol-generating procedures
3. Collection of diagnostic respiratory specimens
4. Manage visitor access and movement within the facility
5. Monitor and manage ill and exposed health care personnel
6. Implement environmental infection control
7. 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:

1. Delay all elective ambulatory provider visits
2. Reschedule elective and non-urgent admissions
3. Delay inpatient and outpatient elective surgical and procedural cases
4. 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

Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing).

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. The CDC has provided information on two of the approved drugs (chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine) and one of the investigational agents (remdesivir) currently in use in the United States.

### *Precautions to take for vulnerable patients*

As COVID-19 is spread by person-to-person contact, limiting the impact of the virus on certain vulnerable patient populations 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.

Interim guidance 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 and symptoms of respiratory illness that are common with COVID-19 should stay home except to get medical care.

Read more tips from CDC to prevent the spread of COVID-19

## Coverage and benefits policies related to COVID-19

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

# Caring for patients through telehealth

### *Develop a telehealth plan*

With 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.