

March 24, 2020

COVID-19 Update for Virtua Affiliated Clinicians

New Policy Regarding Face Masks

Given the widespread transmission of COVID-19 in our community, and out of an abundance of caution for the nuances of this new virus, we will be providing a facemask for all colleagues – clinical and non-clinical — working in our hospitals, patient care settings, and physician offices, including our home care providers, starting Tuesday, March 24. Details regarding this change were provided to all colleagues in latest Coronavirus Colleague Update (Issue 11). That issue is attached in this email message and can be found on [Digital 411](#).

Temporary Respiratory Triage Centers at Virtua

Virtua is preparing respiratory triage centers to support three of its emergency departments. A tent is currently located outside of Virtua Voorhees Hospital and the auditorium inside Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital has been repurposed for this function. One will soon be located outside of Virtua Memorial Hospital.

These spaces will help to triage people who present to the emergency room with symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough, sore throat, or fever. These centers are not specifically for testing COVID-19.

Onsite signage will help guide those seeking treatment to the correct location, as will verbal instructions from Virtua security personnel. For safety, visitors are not permitted inside the triage centers.

The three centers will be open during the day; the exact hours of operation will be determined based on demand. Additional centers may be established at other Virtua locations in the future.

Resource for Communicating with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

This attached card can make a difference in communicating with the deaf and hard of hearing community during COVID-19 response.

Urgent Care

Last week it was noted that the Virtua Urgent Care – Mount Holly site was temporarily closed. That site has now reopened. However, the Cherry Hill and Westmont sites, normally used as dual Urgent Care/Occupational Health locations, are currently seeing occupational health patients only. As a reminder, no Virtua Urgent Care site is currently able to provide testing.

Elective Surgeries

An executive order by Gov. Murphy calls for the postponement of all elective surgical procedures effective March 27. The order defines an “elective” surgery or invasive procedure as any surgery or invasive procedure that can be delayed without undue risk to the current or future health of the patient as determined by the patient’s treating physician or dentist.” Last week, Virtua had already made the decision to postpone elective procedures when deferral will not increase risk to the patient. The decision was made in order to decrease unnecessary traffic and potential exposure as well as to allow for surge capacity and conservation of critical supplies.

Out-of-State Practitioners

During the public health emergency related to COVID-19, the New Jersey Attorney General's office announced it is waiving a number of regulatory requirements for health care professionals licensed in other jurisdictions to become licensed in New Jersey and offer services to residents, including telemedicine and telehealth services.

CMS Quality Reporting

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is also responding to the COVID-19 situation by announcing that it is relaxing requirements under Medicare's various quality reporting programs. It is granting exceptions from reporting requirements and extensions for clinicians and providers participating in Medicare quality reporting programs with respect to upcoming measure reporting and data submission for those programs. A table with details can be found [here](#).

Special Thanks to our Partner, The Clinician Experience Project

Our partner, The Clinician Experience Project by Practicing Excellence is providing a special series of tips to support care teams with patient communication through the COVID-19 crisis. They are offering [this content](#) at no cost and with no viewing restrictions. The series of tips (3 -5 minutes in length) were created by the [Clinician Experience Project](#) to help organizations and clinicians manage patient fears and anxieties during this time.

Topics include:

- How to Talk to Patients About Coronavirus Fears
- Managing Fear and Anxiety Tip – Responding to Patient Fear
- Listening Tip – What Worries You the Most
- Tapping Hope Tip – Hope Cures

Coordinating Donations

Over the weekend, businesses and community members reached out to Virtua offering ways to support and donate. As we are pursuing multiple tactics to ensure we maintain an ample supply of PPE, we are happy to accept donations of unopened/unused masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves – all of which are essential to delivering care for those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Virtua has established a direct email to assist with triaging donations. We gratefully will accept curbside drop-off at 20 W. Stow Road, in Marlton, NJ. Please send any questions about PPE donations to COVIDhelp@virtua.org.