

March 3, 2020

CDC Releases Updated COVID-19 Guidance and Resources for Hospitals and Health Systems

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a number of updated resources and interim guidance documents for hospitals and health systems to prepare for and respond to the possibility of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in their community.

AHA Take: Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, the AHA has worked closely with the CDC, Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies to ensure the hospital field is informed and prepared to respond. The AHA has developed and shared a number of resources, and we update our COVID-19 [webpage](#) daily. **In addition, we have developed and updated [talking points](#) (also attached to end of the Advisory) with key messages that you can use in your community to discuss COVID-19.**

What You Can Do: Please share this advisory with your executive management team, hospital epidemiologist, infection control leadership, emergency department director, emergency preparedness staff, employee health and heads of services (e.g., environmental services, resources and materials managers, hospital engineers, pediatrics and critical care).

See below for a brief description and links to the CDC documents, including tips for consumers, and other COVID-19 updates.

UPDATED CDC RESOURCES AND OTHER COVID-19 INFORMATION

[Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities: Preparing for Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States](#). This guidance outlines goals and strategies for all health care facilities to prepare for and respond to community spread of COVID-19, including escalating actions to take as public health guidance shifts in an evolving outbreak. These include:

- actions to take now to prepare for an outbreak of COVID-19;
- actions to take if COVID-19 is spreading in your community;
- considerations for specific settings, including inpatient and outpatient facilities, as well as long-term care facilities; and
- shifting health care delivery modes during a COVID-19 outbreak, including adjustments to the way providers triage, assess and care for patients using

methods that do not rely on face-to-face care, such as promoting the increased use of telehealth.

Revisions to [Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\)](#). CDC has expanded the criteria for identifying PUIs for COVID-19 to include certain symptomatic patients with no known source of exposure.

[Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). This document outlines steps all health care facilities can take to get ready for an outbreak of COVID-19 in a community, including carrying out basic preparedness activities; communicating with staff and patients; and protecting patients and health care workers.

Updates to [Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators](#). This updated document offers a series of strategies or options to optimize supplies of disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirators (commonly called “N95 respirators”) in health care settings when there is limited supply. In this update, the agency adds information on [Crisis/Alternative Strategies](#) to the previous information on [Conventional](#) and [Contingency](#) Capacity Strategies, and includes additional information to expand on strategies, including two new resources:

- [Checklist for Healthcare Facilities: Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators during the COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Release of Stockpiled N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators Beyond the Manufacturer-Designated Shelf Life: Considerations for COVID-19 Response](#)

[Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities \(LTCF\)](#). This document describes general strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in LTCF, including strategies to prevent the introduction of respiratory germs into a facility and to prevent the spread of respiratory germs within a facility.

[Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#). This resource includes steps to protect oneself and the community from COVID-19.

[ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding](#). CDC last month [released ICD-10-CM diagnosis coding guidance](#) for COVID-19 infections and deaths, developed with input from the AHA, and plans to release a [new unique diagnosis code](#) for the virus in October.

NEXT STEPS

The AHA will continue to share information with hospitals and health systems, including through written communications, calls and webinars. Please visit our [webpage](#) for the latest information.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have questions, please contact Roslyne Schulman at rschulman@aha.org or Nancy Foster at nfoster@aha.org.

Updated March 3, 2020

Talking Points: Hospitals and Health Systems – COVID-19 Response

- As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, hospitals and health systems know our patients and communities are increasingly concerned whether and how the virus is spreading in communities.
- That's why we are working closely with our federal, state and local partners to respond to this challenge, update contingency plans and stay informed with the most up-to-date information.
- In particular, hospitals and health systems are focused on identifying, isolating and informing on new cases of patients known or suspected of having the virus.
 1. We are updating our electronic health records to identify patients who meet the most recent CDC criteria that might mean they have COVID-19;
 2. We are isolating those who may have the virus in special rooms where they are assessed by trained personnel; and
 3. We are making sure to inform local public health officials when a possible COVID-19 patient presents to a hospital so that these patients can quickly be tested for the virus and public health officials can start to identify other potentially affected individuals who have been in close contact.
- It is important to know that all hospitals and health systems regularly prepare for the unexpected and are required to conduct regular preparedness drills. We are always training our staff on how to protect themselves as they care for patients.
- Just in the last decade, outbreaks like swine flu, Ebola and Zika have strengthened our readiness and emergency preparedness, and have taught us important lessons on how to respond to infectious disease outbreaks.
- We are also closely following CDC recommendations on how to best use and preserve existing supplies of personal protective equipment due to concerns about limited supplies.
- We are paying close attention to the protection of our health care workers on the front lines. They are the most valuable resource when it comes to treating and stopping the spread of the virus. As such, we want to make sure they have the personal protective equipment, training and support they need to provide care to patients.
- In an effort to increase our capacity to respond, [the American Hospital Association, in partnership with the American Nurses Association](#), recently asked Congress to swiftly provide \$1 billion in initial supplemental emergency funding to support the urgent preparedness and response needs of hospitals, health systems, physicians and nurses on the front lines of this outbreak.
- It is important to remember that hospitals and health systems frequently confront disease outbreaks, adapting quickly to serve their communities.