

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The true impact of a COVID-19 outbreak in a U.S. community cannot be predicted. However, all healthcare facilities can take steps now to prepare for such an outbreak and protect both their patients and staff.

Be Prepared:

- **Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.** Know where to turn for reliable, up-to-date information in your local community. Monitor the CDC COVID-19 [website](#) and your state and local health department [website](#)  for the latest information.
- **Develop, or review, your facility's emergency plan.** A COVID-19 outbreak in your community could lead to staff absenteeism. Prepare alternative staffing plans to ensure as many of your facility's staff are available as possible.
- **Establish relationships with key healthcare and public health partners in your community.** Make sure you know about healthcare and public health emergency planning and response activities in your community. Learn about plans to manage patients, accept transfers, and share supplies. Review any memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with affiliates, your healthcare coalition, and other partners to provide support or assistance during emergencies.
- **Create an emergency contact list.** Develop and continuously update emergency contact lists for key partners and ensure the lists are accessible in key locations in your facility. For example, know how to reach your local or state health department in an emergency.

Communicate with Staff and Patients:

- **Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff.** Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19, the potential for surge, and your facility's preparedness plans.
- **Communicate about COVID-19 with your patients.** Provide updates about changes to your policies regarding appointments, providing non-urgent patient care by telephone, and visitors. Consider using your facility's website or social media pages to share updates.

Protect your workforce:

- **Screen patients and visitors for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before entering your healthcare facility.** Keep up to date on the recommendations for preventing spread of COVID-19 on [CDC's website](#).
- **Ensure proper use of personal protection equipment (PPE).** Healthcare personnel who come in close contact with confirmed or possible patients with COVID-19 **should wear** the appropriate [personal protective equipment](#).
- **Conduct an inventory of available PPE.** Consider conducting an inventory of available PPE supplies. Explore strategies to [optimize PPE supplies](#).
- **Encourage sick employees to stay home.** Personnel who develop respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) should be instructed not to report to work. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

Protect your patients:

- **Stay up-to-date** on the best ways to [manage patients with COVID-19](#).
- **Separate patients with respiratory symptoms so they are not waiting among other patients seeking care.** Identify a separate, well-ventilated space that allows waiting patients and visitors to be separated.
- **Consider the strategies to prevent patients who can be cared for at home from coming to your facility potentially exposing themselves or others to germs, like:**
 - Using your telephone system to deliver messages to incoming callers about when to seek medical care at your facility, when to seek emergency care, and where to go for information about caring for a person with COVID at home.
 - Adjusting your hours of operation to include telephone triage and follow-up of patients during a community outbreak.
 - Leveraging telemedicine technologies and self-assessment tools.