

To you, our community member:

At Northern Arizona Healthcare, your health and wellness are our top priority. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a significant experience here in our community, for our country, and around the world, and it is a great source of stress and anxiety for many of us. Please know that our 3,000+ dedicated colleagues, including 300+ physicians, are working day and night to ensure we are well prepared to take care of you and your loved ones as needed during this time. Our hospitals and outpatient centers remain open and safe. And we continue to offer the same, high-quality patient care.

Sharing clear, accurate, and up-to-date information about our coronavirus response is a priority. Knowledge is power in a time like this, so we will do our part to keep you informed.

What steps is Northern Arizona Healthcare taking to prepare for the virus?

We are taking a proactive and measured approach to planning for COVID-19. Internally, there are daily planning sessions with medical experts from across Northern Arizona Healthcare to plan for any and all possibilities.

As of March 18th, we instituted greater limitations on visitation on all our campuses. Any person eligible to visit a patient in our facilities must be free of symptoms, including fever, runny nose, cough, and shortness of breath. For complete guidelines, please visit our website at www.NAHealth.com.

We are also working collaboratively and in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Coconino and Yavapai county health departments, the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS), as well as our region's first responders.

Northern Arizona Healthcare is taking every precaution to provide all patients with the highest quality care while protecting staff, other patients, and visitors. Several proactive initiatives underway across our health system include:

- Updating our Emergency Department screening protocols to rapidly detect patients with possible COVID-19.
- Implementing a more stringent, system-wide visitation policy.
- Working with Coconino County to develop community specimen collection sites.
- Providing a COVID-19 Informational Hotline (928-773-2301 or 1-833-708-0894) that is available 24/7 and staffed Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., which includes clinical triage.
- Planning for the potential influx of a large number of COVID-19 patients in the future.
- Providing a frequently updated website presence (our Web Hub) for updates about COVID-19.

These are the most common questions we have been receiving:

What is the coronavirus?

The coronavirus is actually a family of viruses that includes a number of respiratory illnesses. The strain of virus responsible for the current outbreak is called the "novel" coronavirus because it is a virus that has not previously been detected in humans. The name COVID-19 is short for "coronavirus disease 2019." Symptoms include fever, coughing, sore throat, and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person, but good hygiene and social distancing can help prevent infection.

Who is at risk for the coronavirus?

Your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from the coronavirus is low—unless you are older or have an underlying condition. Older people, pregnant women, and those with chronic health issues are generally at higher risk of becoming severely ill from the coronavirus. Importantly, COVID-19 is more infectious and more deadly than flu; so, it should be taken seriously but shouldn't be a cause for panic. Most people infected with the novel virus have mild, moderate, or no symptoms at all.

How is coronavirus different from the flu?

Some symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, specifically a dry cough and fever. COVID-19 more often causes shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, a sign to seek immediate medical attention. The flu causes aches, fatigue, headache, and chills; these appear to be less common with COVID-19. If you are sneezing, or have a stuffy or runny nose, the good news is that you probably just have a garden-variety common cold.

Staying safe:

What can you do?

The same measures that help prevent the spread of the flu—frequent and thorough handwashing, not touching your face, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow, avoiding people who are sick, and staying away from people if you're sick—also help to protect against spread of the COVID-19 virus. In general, avoiding close contact with other people is an effective step we can all take to help limit the spread of the virus. The practice of Social Distancing is one way we can stay safe. In short, that means an avoidance of large gatherings and maintaining a distance of 6 feet from other people. This reduces the chance of contact with those knowingly or unknowingly carrying the infection.

When should you seek medical attention?

People who develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, should stay home and call your healthcare provider. We are asking those without severe symptoms to avoid the Emergency Department. This will allow the doctors, nurses, and other care providers to focus attention on those most sick and in need of care or hospitalization.

As this situation continues to evolve, we're committed to providing the latest information to you our patients, community, and also to our NAH family of colleagues. We are in continuous communication with state and national officials to gather the most up-to-date information and will continue to provide regular updates to the public through our website and social media channels.

We are focusing on what we can control: screening patients; training and educating our caregivers; making sure hospital processes are in place; and educating the public to practice hand hygiene, covering your coughs and sneezes, avoiding close contact, and continually disinfecting your surroundings.

Please visit www.NAHealth.com for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 and our visitation policies. We will continue to make our website a resource by providing links to the latest information from the CDC, as well as local Department of Health resources and contact information. Because this is a novel virus, we expect the situation to evolve. We will continue to monitor and adapt to the situation.

Every day we come to work with the health and safety of you in mind. Thank you for entrusting us with your care.

Stay safe and be healthy,

Flo Spyrow, MSN
President and CEO

John Mougin, MD
Chief Quality Officer