

DATE: March 19, 2020

TO: Reliance PO Practices

FROM: Lisa Geffros, MD, Medical Director

SUBJECT: Guidance on Preparing your Office for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Current evidence suggests the mode of transmission for COVID-19 is person-to-person from close exposure through respiratory droplets from infected individual's coughing and sneezing. These droplets can land in mouths, noses, or eyes of those nearby and possibly inhaled into lungs. Airborne transmission over long distances appears unlikely.

Implement practices to minimize exposures before patient arrival, on arrival, and during the visit. SOURCE CONTROL is a vital component of limiting spread of the virus and must be considered given current and potential shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Before Patient Arrival

Prepare Your Clinic

- Consider instituting telemedicine appointments – www.doxy.me provides a platform to perform telemedicine visits.
- Consider extending prescriptions so that patients do not need to be seen.
- Know how to contact the health department and stay connected with them to stay up to date on the virus in your community.
- Assess and restock supplies now and on a regular basis.
- Create a triage protocol
 - Considering having patients call the office on arrival, triage by phone, and wait in their car until a room is ready for their visit.
 - or
 - Place staff at the entrance to triage patients.

Train Your Staff

- Confirm all clinical staff know how to use PPE correctly and safely.
- Confirm all staff know the symptoms of COVID-19 – fever, cough, shortness of breath, other difficulties breathing.
- Confirm all staff know good hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Ask staff to stay home if sick and send staff home if they are sick.

Communicate with patients

- Ask about symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath) on reminder calls and if patients have or develop respiratory symptoms to reschedule if possible.
- Consider rescheduling routine, non-urgent visits.
- Consider instructing patients to call the office at arrival for triage.
- Post signs at entrance and in waiting rooms about triage policies, proper hygiene and prevention.

Prepare the waiting area and patient rooms

- Remove communal objects – reading materials, pens, toys, etc.
- Post informational materials.
- Provide supplies – alcohol-based hand rub, tissues, open trash cans, and soap at sinks.
- Space chairs in the waiting room 3-6 feet apart.
- Use barriers like screens if possible.

Upon Patient Arrival

- Triage Patients based on symptoms and history
 - Fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, other respiratory symptoms.
 - Contact with a COVID-19 patient or a person under investigation
 - Travel
- Provide symptomatic patients facemasks or tissues to cover mouth and nose.
- Isolate symptomatic patients either in a designated respiratory room with the door closed or have them wait in their vehicle.
- Limit the number of staff entering the designated room and utilize personal protective equipment (face masks or respirators, eye protection (Personal eyeglasses and contact lenses are NOT adequate eye protection), gloves, and gowns.
- Wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before putting on and removing PPE or before entering and after leaving care rooms.
- If not waiting in their car, have all other patients wait 3-6 feet from one another.
- Limit non-patient visitors.

After Patients are Assessed

- Consider COVID-19 testing.
- If at-home care is felt to be a suitable option provide at-home care instructions to patients with respiratory symptoms and consider telehealth options as follow up.
- Provide guidance for prevention of COVID-19 spreading to others -
 - Patients with symptomatic confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until 3 days have passed since they have been without fever without using fever reducing medications and improvement of respiratory symptoms AND it has been at least 7 days since the symptoms first appeared.
 - Patients with asymptomatic COVID-19 may end home isolation precautions after 7 days have passed since their first positive COVID-10 test.
- Notify the health department of patients with COVID-19 symptoms.
- After the patients leave clean frequently touched surfaces such as counters, beds, seating, etc
 - Use cleaners and water to pre-clean surfaces.
 - Apply an EPA-registered, hospital grade disinfectant
 - PPE should be worn during cleaning.

Stay up to date at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp.html>