

Guidance regarding COVID-19

The COVID-19 coronavirus is a new viral strain, and there is a great deal of information we are still learning about it. There is some basic information which will be helpful to prevent the spread and minimize the costs to this new outbreak.

1. COVID-19 is a new strain of a very common viral family of coronaviruses. We have all had coronaviruses in the past, which causes cold symptoms. This new strain is different enough that it is causing a more severe illness in some people (most people still have only mild cold symptoms). If you have had a positive coronavirus test on a viral panel, this was the old strains, not the COVID 19 strain, which cannot be detected on the viral panel tested currently.
2. Current data suggests that children are not as severely affected by COVID 19 as adults are. However, it is still unclear whether children with congenital heart disease are also protected. For this reason, we recommend treating children with congenital heart disease as a vulnerable population.
3. As a viral illness, there are not “curative” therapies for a COVID 19 infection, the way antibiotics cure bacterial disease. Our treatments focus on supportive cares (controlling fever, treating cough/cold symptoms, supporting patients if they develop severe respiratory symptoms.) For this reason, if you have mild symptoms, it is best to treat yourself at home with rest, hydration, Tylenol or Motrin, and cold medicine. However, if you have severe respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, difficulty breathing) you should come to the ER.
4. At this time we are focusing on trying to prevent or slow the spread of COVID 19. For this reason, schools are extending spring break, events which gather large numbers of people are being postponed or cancelled, and travel is being curtailed. Please help in this effort by avoiding large gatherings. If you developed cold symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, body aches) please isolate yourself from all people. This can keep our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed and ensure there is care available for all.
5. If there is a family member who has been exposed to COVID 19, or is ill with cold-like symptoms, it is best to isolate that person from the rest of the family. Ensure that they stay in one room, away from the children and pets. Everyone should practice good hand washing. All hand sanitizers, if soap and water are not available, should contain at least 60% alcohol. Clean all frequently used surfaces with a disinfecting cleaner. Use tissues for sneezes and runny noses and throw them in a lined garbage can. Always wash hands after using tissues.
6. As of 3/13/20, rapid testing for COVID 19 is not available in San Antonio. Because of this, testing is being used mainly to isolate patients who have severe respiratory symptoms and need hospitalization. We DO NOT recommend at this time that you go to the ER for a test if you do not have severe respiratory symptoms. When widespread testing becomes available, we will change this recommendation.

7. To minimize exposure to the virus in our office, we ask that any patient who is ill with fever, runny nose, or cough cancel their appointment and not come to the office. If they have severe respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath or increased work of breathing) they should go directly to the ER for evaluation. If you are not sure if they need the ER, please feel free to call our office and we will be happy to guide you over the phone. There will be no consequence for any cancellation or no-show during this time. We also ask that only one person accompanies the patient to their visit, or if the patient is over 18, that they come to the visit alone. This is to minimize unintentional exposures. If the accompanying adult is ill, we also ask that they not come to the office. We appreciate your assistance in helping us protect our vulnerable patients.
8. Our office is not planning to close during this outbreak. However, we will be happy to reschedule non-urgent appointments to a time after the outbreak to prevent yourself or your child from being unintentionally exposed to unknown carriers of COVID 19. If community transmission of COVID 19 is found, we will change this to a recommendation. This would include all scheduled follow up visits. If you would like more guidance on this, please feel free to call our office.

We understand that there is a great deal of fear regarding this outbreak, much of which stems from the many unknowns regarding this new infection. We will try to keep you all as updated as possible. We will be happy to work with all our families to ensure everyone remains safe and healthy.