

Updated June 10, 2021

The following FAQs are listed by topic in alphabetical order for reference. Topics include website links as information changes quickly. The date following each link refers to the CDC update used in this FAQ.

These FAQs can relate to a home health, hospice, private duty, infusion, palliative care or DMEPOS providers. **Weekly updates made to topics or websites are noted in red to make it easier to see changes week to week.**

If you have questions or comments, please send them to education@chapinc.org Thank you!!

April 22, 2021: The Federal Public Health Emergency Extended to July 21, 2021: Secretary Xavier Becerra has extended the PHE **effective April 21, 2021 for 90 days or mid-July**. The Biden Administration also sent a letter to the governors advising that 60-day notice will be given when the PHE will end.

<https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Public-Health-Emergency-Message-to-Governors.pdf> Jan 22 2021

A

Assisted and Independent Living Facility Access:

Check your state to determine if the governor or health department has mandated staff COVID-19 testing for ALFs. Home health and hospice staff are included in mandated testing as home care or hospice staff are a 'vendor'. Weekly or bi-weekly COVID 19 testing may be required.

CMS addresses Home Health Agency (HHA) and Hospice access to assisted (ALF) and independent living facilities (ILF) and when Hospices should Discharge Patients if Restricted or No Access

- ALFs and ILFs are not subject to federal regulation, rather state authority.
- Hospice and HHA personnel are expected to participate in any facility required screening.
- If access is restricted, hospices and HHAs should communicate with the facility administration about the nature of the restriction and gaining access to hospice or home care patients.
- **HOSPICE DISCHARGE:** If after reasonable attempts are made to access hospice patients in person and documented in the patient's record, the hospice is expected to discharge the patient as "outside of the hospice's service area" (Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 9, 20.2.3):
 - Additionally, a hospice must forward to the patient's attending physician a copy of the hospice discharge summary and patient's clinical record if requested.

[andintermediate-care-facilities-individuals-intellectual.pdf](#) June 2020 Pages 9-13 •

If an HHA is refused in-person access, document the situation in the patient's record and advise the patient's physician. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-18-hha-revised.pdf>

(March 10 Memo Revised April 23, 2020. Note the HHA reference to ALF/ILF access on page 6)

Updated June 10, 2021

C**COVID-19 – Updates****Current Infection Rates per 100K Population, Variants of Concern and Breakthroughs:****June 10: New COVID-19 Cases per Week**

- **The 7-day average of new cases has decreased by 10%.** The current 7-day moving average of daily new cases (14,349) decreased 35.2% compared with the previous 7-day moving average (22,139).
- The US is 94% below Jan 2021 peak of 252,768.
- Highest number of cases/100K in past 7 days CO, FL, WA, WY, (new) MT, (new) NV, (new) UT, new MO:
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days June 10, 2021

May 27, 2021: States with Lowest Vaccination Rates: Low vaccination rates allow the virus to circulate, re-emerge and possibly form new variants: States with vaccination rates lower than 40%: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/951643?src=mkm_covid_update_210521_MSCPEDIT&uac=117157HN&impID=3391349&faf=1%20#vp_1

Variants:

- Viruses constantly change through mutation. CDC monitors variants of concern (VOC) that have mutations that cause the virus to act in ways that are significant to public health (e.g., more severe disease, spreads more easily between humans, requires different treatments, or may change vaccine effectiveness).
- There are 3 variant levels: Variant of Interest, Variant of Concern, Variant of High Consequence
- Variants of Concern circulating in the US: UK (B.1.1.7); Brazil/Japan (P.1); B.1.351 (South Africa); B.1.427 and B.1.429 California. All have 20-50% increase in transmissibility.
- As of May 27, 2021: CDC advises that 74% of all new infections will be identified associated with the UK variant B.1.1.7, followed by variant P.1 (first identified Brazil, Japan) expected to hit 7% of infections.
- Variants are tracked and reported every two weeks at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html> May 20, 2021.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO) has reclassified the B.1.617 strain in India, as a “variant of concern”** — stating globally it has the “highest public health implications, due to Increased transmissibility, reduced response to antibody treatment. WHO advises the vaccinations are still effective. To date the CDC identifies the B.1.617 as a variant of interest/variant of concern, not yet raising it to a variant of concern (VOC)

Breakthrough Infection:

COVID 19 Breakthrough Infection Among Fully Vaccinated Individuals Only Reported by CDC if Infection Results in Hospitalization or Death as of May 7, 2021

- A vaccine breakthrough case definition:

Updated June 10, 2021

A person who has SARS-CoV-2 RNA or antigen detected on a respiratory specimen collected ≥ 14 days after completing the series of an FDA authorized COVID-19 vaccine.

- Current data suggest that COVID-19 authorized vaccines protect against most SARS-CoV-2 variants in the US. However, variants will cause some of these vaccine breakthrough cases, as no vaccines are 100% effective.
- CDC monitors reported breakthrough cases including time since vaccination, vaccine type or lot number and as possible respiratory specimens to identify genomic sequencing associated with the infection.
- The current profile of 9000+ breakthrough cases of COVID 19 as of April 27 includes:
 - 45% were among people ≥ 60 years of age.
 - 63% are female.
 - 27% of the vaccine breakthrough infections were reported as asymptomatic.
 - 9% were known to be hospitalized and 1% died.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/breakthrough-cases.html> April 27, 2021

COVID 19 Adult Signs and Symptoms:

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

Fever or chills	Cough	Headache
Muscle or body aches	Sore Throat	Shortness of Breath or difficulty breathing
Fatigue	Congestion or Runny Nose	
Diarrhea	New loss of smell and taste	Nausea or vomiting

** Lost of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> Feb 2021

CDC Clinician On-Call Center is a hotline with trained CDC clinicians available to answer COVID-19 questions daily on a wide range of topics, such as diagnostic challenges, clinical management, and infection prevention and control. *To reach this service, call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and ask for the Clinician On-Call Center.*

COVID 19 Illness severity Ranges from Mild to Severe Update:

- Mild to moderate disease (absence of viral pneumonia or hypoxia) Most able to manage illness at home and self-isolate.
- Severe (most common symptoms – pneumonia, ARDS, sepsis and septic shock, cardiomyopathy and arrhythmia, acute kidney failure, GI bleeding) Requiring hospitalization for management.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html> Feb 2021

Updated June 10, 2021

Update of Medical Conditions in Adults Who are at risk of Severe Illness from COVID 19

CDC completed an evidence review process for each medical condition on this list to ensure they met criteria for inclusion. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html> April 29, 2021

Cancer	Overweight (BMI >25kg/m but <30kg/m), Obesity (BMI 30kg/m but < 40 kg/m), Severe obesity (BMI > 40kg/m)
Chronic Kidney Disease	Pregnancy
Chronic lung disease: including COPD, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis, moderate to severe asthma, interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension	Smoking, Current or Former
	Solid Organ or Blood Stem Cell Transplant
	Stroke or cerebrovascular disease affecting blood flow to the brain
Heart conditions such as heart failure, CAD, cardiomyopathies, or hypertension	Immune compromised state (weakened immune system)
Diabetes – Type 1 or 2	Sickle Cell Disease or thalassemia
Dementia or other neurological conditions including Alzheimer's	Down Syndrome
	Substance Use Disorders
HIV Infection	Liver disease: alcoholic related or nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

COVID-19 Population by Age by Risk for Hospitalization and Death Update

Age Range	Hospitalization	Death
5-17 yrs.	Comparison Group	Comparison Group
18-29 yrs.	6x higher	10x higher
30-39 yrs.	10x higher	45x higher
40-49 yrs.	15x higher	130x higher
50-64 yrs.	25x higher	440x higher
65-74 yrs.	40x higher	1300x higher
75-84 years	65x higher	3220x higher
85+ years	95x higher	8700x higher

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html> April 16, 2021

Updated June 10, 2021**Transmission Risk:****Airborne Transmission Risk for COVID 19:**

SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted by exposure to infectious respiratory fluids, most commonly by people inhaling very small respiratory droplets. The risk of becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 varies according to the amount of virus to which a person is exposed, distance from the source, and ventilation in the space.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/index.html> May 7, 2021

COVID-19 Transmission Risk through Contaminated Surfaces:**COVID-19 spread through contact with contaminated surfaces-information to share with patients, families, and staff providing homemaker services, as well as in offices:**

It is possible for people to be infected through contact with contaminated surfaces or objects (fomites), but the risk is generally considered to be low. Research has confirmed that the COVID-19 virus can degrade quickly upon contact with surfaces. The risk for contamination is based on the following:

- The infection prevalence rate in the community
- The amount of virus that people known to be infected with COVID 19 expel for an example in a cough or sneeze.
- The accumulation of expelled virus particles onto surfaces, which is affected by air flow and ventilation, and the efficiency of transferring those virus particles from the surfaces to the mucous membranes on the face (nose, mouth, eyes).

What Can Be Done to Reduce Risk of Transmission from Contaminated Surfaces:

- Ask unvaccinated visitors to wear masks.
- Isolate people who are sick with COVID-19
- Have everyone in the household, and staff (including those in the office) wash hands often, especially when returning from outside.
- Remind folks about cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Use the two-step process when cleaning:
 - 1) Clean visibly dirty surfaces with household cleaners containing soap or detergent.
 - 2) Then disinfecting if your disinfectant product does not have a cleaning agent (check the label to verify). Use a disinfectant that is known to be effective against COVID 19, see below.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html> April 5 2021

Disinfectants Effective for Surfaces Contaminated with COVID-19 – EPA website Made Easier to Use Table N

- Video and infographic on how to use EPA product Table N.

List N <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>

Ventilation-the Next Element in Reducing Transmission Inside Buildings:

The next element of protection from spreading the Virus: (Mask, 6 ft distancing, avoid large gatherings and small spaces). The issue related to COVID spread in small spaces, and inside any building is ventilation. CDC has issued simplified guide to improve ventilation, including in homes and office buildings.

- For homes, better ventilation means primarily open windows and increase use of fans.

Updated June 10, 2021

- CDC site noted below also includes specific technologies information including such items as ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI), otherwise known as germicidal ultraviolet (GUV). It is a disinfection tool used in many different settings, such as residential, commercial, educational, and healthcare settings and is effective with COVID-19. Issues is finding a reliable UVGI manufacturer.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html> March 23, 2021

- **Poorly ventilated space** is to be avoided as well as crowds even if fully vaccinated.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html> March 23 2021

Children and COVID 19 –

Children can be infected with COVID-19, can get sick from COVID-19, and can spread the virus to others. Children who have COVID-19 but have no symptoms (“asymptomatic”) can still spread the virus to others. Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

Pediatric Patients 17 yrs. and Younger-COVID 19 Incidence Update:

- May 6, 2021: 3.5M cases in children (17yrs or younger) representing 14% of all COVID cases.
- 0.1 to 1.9% of reported pediatric cases resulted in hospitalization; mortality 0-0.03% among reporting states, no change in proportions over the past two quarters.
- 7 states report that children are >18% of state’s COVID cases: ME, MN, NM, SC (sustained 5 months); TN (sustained 5 months); VT, NM (sustained 5 months)

<https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP%20and%20CHA%20-%20Children%20and%20COVID-19%20State%20Data%20Report%205.6.21%20FINAL.pdf> May 6, 2021

Conditions of Children at Increased Risk for Severe COVID 19 Illness also Applies to Babies of <1 yr.

old: obesity, genetic neurologic or metabolic conditions, sickle cell disease, congenital (since birth) heart disease, diabetes, asthma and other chronic lung disease, and immunosuppression due to malignancy or immune-weakening medications, medical complexity (children with multiple chronic conditions that affect many parts of the body or are dependent on technology or other significant supports for daily life.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/symptoms.html> March 17, 2021

Symptoms of COVID 19 in Children:

Symptoms can look like symptoms of other common illnesses such as colds, strep throat, or allergies. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 in children are fever and cough, but children may have any of these signs or symptoms of COVID-19:

Fever or chills	Cough	Nausea, vomiting	Diarrhea	Sore throat
Stomachache	Tiredness	Shortness of	Headache	Poor appetite
Muscle or	Nasal	Breath, Difficulty	New loss	or feeding in
Body aches	congestion	Breathing	of taste	baby <1 yr. old
	runny nose		or smell	

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/symptoms.html> March 17, 2021

Updated June 10, 2021

MISC-C: Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children:

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a rare, serious condition where different body parts become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. The cause of MIS-C is not known. Children with the disease test positive for COVID-19 or have been around someone with COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/mis-c/>

Update: CDC information about MIS-C:

- CDC has reports of **3742** confirmed cases of MIS-C and **35** deaths (<1%)
- MIS-C reported in all states except Vermont and Maine. Most cases reported in California (sustained 6 months), Florida (sustained 6 months).
- 99% of children tested positive for COVID 19, 1% were around someone with confirmed COVID-19.
- 50% of cases are among children aged 5-9, *with the average age of 9.*
- 63% of reported cases in children who are Hispanic or Latino, or Non-Hispanic Black
- 60% of reported cases are male. <https://www.cdc.gov/mis-c/cases/index.html> May 3, 2021

Symptoms of MIS-C Requiring Emergency Care: NOTE: Not all children have all the same symptoms.

Trouble breathing	Inability to wake or stay awake
Pain or pressure in the chest that does not resolve	Pale, gray or bluish colored skin, lips, nail beds depending on skin tone
New confusion	Severe abdominal pain

Study of Home Health COVID 19 Patients Risk for Rehospitalization: Among patients with COVID-19 admitted to home health care, comorbid conditions associated with rehospitalization or death included heart failure, diabetes, chronic pain, and cognitive impairment.

Bowles *et al.* *Surviving COVID-19 after hospital discharge: Symptom, functional, and adverse outcomes of home health recipients*, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (November 24, 2020).

CDC Guidance for Other Community Settings

- **New CDC Guidance for Resident and Staff of Group Homes** -Including those with residents who leave to go to work or an on-site sheltered workshop. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/group-homes.html> March 23, 2021
- **New CDC Guidance for Providers to Unsheltered Homeless** - Interim Guidance on Unsheltered Homelessness and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for Homeless Service Providers and Local Officials <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html> March 23, 2021

Updated June 10, 2021

D**Disaster Shelters and COVID 19**

CDC Guidelines for Disaster Shelters During the Pandemic: The CDC has released guidelines for state and county governments when opening shelters due to disasters (e.g., hurricanes, flooding, etc.).

- Shelters with 50 or less people should be prioritized over large congregate shelters.
- Daily symptom screening, and isolation area for those with COVID symptoms.
- The CDC preference is that vulnerable individuals *are not* moved to a shelter but remain at home.
- Medical support shelters and functional needs shelters may be available for the more vulnerable populations during disasters.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/eh-practitioners/general-population-disaster-shelters.html>

F**FDA Safety Communication Regarding Over-the Counter Pulse Oximeters:** February 19, 2021

Concern about the growing number of purchases of over the counter (OTC) pulse oximeters during the pandemic as these products have serious limitations including inaccurate readings. OTC pulse oximeters do not undergo FDA approval or clinical testing and are not intended for medical purposes.

The FDA has issued a safety communication to pay close attention to all health symptoms, particularly shortness of breath or low oxygen levels *rather than rely solely upon the readings of a pulse oximeter*. These symptoms include.

- Bluish coloring in the face, lips, or nails;
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or a worsening cough.
- Restlessness and discomfort
- Chest pain or tightness
- Fast or racing pulse rate.

CAUTION: Some patients with low oxygen levels may not show any of these symptoms.

- Education regarding appropriate use of pulse oximeters should include:
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
 - Remove any fingernail polish.
 - Make sure your hand is warm when placing the oximeter on your finger.
 - Keep the hand relaxed and held below heart level.
 - Sit still and wait a few seconds until the reading stops changing and displays one steady number.
 - Write the oxygen level with the date and time of the reading for easy tracking of changes and trends.
 - It is often more meaningful to look at changes/trends over time than one single reading.

Updated June 10, 2021**Flu Vaccination and COVID Resource – Update Post 2020-2021 Flu Season**

Ensuring immunization services are maintained or reinitiated is essential for protecting individuals and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases and outbreaks and reducing the burden of respiratory illness during the upcoming influenza season.

The following website is a collection of federal resources designed to guide vaccine planning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html> April 6, 2021

H**Herd Immunity –**

The United States would need 80% of Americans not susceptible to the virus to achieve herd immunity. Per Dr. Fauci, the goal now is to increase vaccination levels to be able to keep serious infections at a manageable level and keep hospitalizations and deaths as low as possible.

M**CDC Masking Guidelines for Fully Vaccinated Individuals Do Not Apply to Healthcare Settings:**

In general, fully vaccinated healthcare staff should continue to wear PPE while providing care/services. The use of PPE for healthcare staff remains unchanged.

May 27, 2021 Masking Update for Individuals: CDC provides a quick guide infographic at: This is not for healthcare settings. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
May 16, 2021

N**Nursing Home CMS Regulations for Vaccination and Reporting – Including Hospice and Home Care Staff effective May 21, 2021:**

CMS has published a proposed rule for comment that puts in place the following regulations *effective May 21, 2021*. Comments due July 12, 2021

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/05/13/2021-10122/medicare-and-medicaid-programs-covid-19-vaccine-requirements-for-long-term-care-ltc-facilities-and>

Key Points of the new Rule for LTC facilities and ICFs-IID facilities impacting Home Health and Hospice:

- The rule establishes penalties for non-compliance with the provisions.
- COVID-19 vaccines, when available, must be offered to all residents, clients, and *staff - defined as individuals who work in the facility on a regular (at least once a week) basis – including nurses, aides,*

Updated June 10, 2021

hospice staff, therapists (physical, occupational), physicians and licensed independent practitioner, mental health therapist, volunteers, and other health care providers.

- LTC facilities must report COVID-19 vaccination status of residents *and staff* to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) database NHSN on a weekly basis.
- LTC and ICF facilities must offer and document COVID 19 education to all facility residents, clients and staff covering:
 - the benefits of vaccination, and the
 - risks associated with vaccination including potential side-effects of the vaccine such as aches or fever, as well as rare reactions such as anaphylaxis.

Updated Nursing Home Staff and Resident Testing Guidelines: The federal regulations addressing testing scope and frequency are in addition to any state required testing and any facility-specific testing. The federal publication with detail has been updated 4/27/21.

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh.pdf>

Key points of testing changes:

- If a symptomatic individual is identified, staff testing applies to vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals if they have symptoms.
- Outbreak (any new case in a facility): all staff are tested, vaccinated and unvaccinated, until no new cases identified.
- Routine testing of unvaccinated staff should be based on the extent of the virus in the facility's county. Fully vaccinated staff do not have to be routinely tested.
- Facilities must have procedures in place to address staff who refuse testing. Procedures should ensure that staff who have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and refuse testing are prohibited from entering the building until the return-to-work criteria are met.

Workers who are not employees of the facility but provide direct care to the facility's residents, such as hospice workers, social workers, clergy etc., must be permitted to come into the facility if they are not subject to a work exclusion due to an exposure to COVID-19 or show signs or symptoms of COVID-19 after being screened. All staff must comply with COVID-19 testing requirements.

Nursing Home (ICF) and SNF Revised Visitation

CMS with the CDC have updated visitation guidance still emphasizing maintaining infection prevention practices, including maintaining at least 6 feet between people and wearing masks - noting the continued risk of COVID-19 transmission. Note: states may have their own guidance.

NOTE: *Continued screening for temperature, signs, or symptoms of COVID 19, or close contact with a person who is confirmed COVID 19 in the past 14 days is still recommended for all who enter regardless of the visitor's vaccination status.*

- **"Fully vaccinated" is defined by CDC** as a person who is ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine.
- **Outdoor visitation is preferred** even if resident and others are *fully vaccinated*.

Updated June 10, 2021

- **Indoor visitation should be always allowed** and for all residents -regardless of vaccination status.
 - If a resident is fully vaccinated, they can have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after.
 - Compassionate care visits and visits required under federal disability rights law should be always allowed, for any resident -vaccinated or unvaccinated.

Exceptions to Indoor LTC Visitation- An Outbreak which is a new onset of COVID-19. One new COVID-19 case among residents or staff and the facility should immediately begin outbreak testing and suspend all visitation (except that required under federal disability rights law), until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed.

- Visitation can resume if residents in a particular area/unit of the facility have no cases of COVID 19 after the first round of testing.
- If the first round of outbreak testing reveals one or more new case of COVID-19 in other areas/units (e.g., new cases in two or more units), facilities should suspend visitations for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

LTC Visitor Testing and Vaccination: CDC and CMS encourage (not require) facilities in medium (orange)- or high (red) positivity counties to *offer* visitor testing. Visitors should not be required to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such) as a condition of visitation.

- Facilities should prioritize visitors that visit regularly (e.g., weekly), although any visitor can be tested.
- Facilities may encourage visitors to be tested on their own prior to coming to the facility (e.g., within 2–3 days).
- CMS and CDC encourage visitors to become vaccinated.

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf> Revised 3/10/2021 for the purpose state survey, effective April 10, 2021.

O

Operational Changes for Managing Healthcare Staff during PHE:

CDC Recommendations for “Post-Acute” Providers and Their Staff Now with Vaccinations Available:

- As an employer, you are required to follow federal, state, and local guidance in creating your workplace policy.
- CDC recommends that you maintain a vaccination record and status of all staff.
- Per the Epstein Becker and Green law firm, an employer can ask to affirm employee vaccination or require proof, what you believe is needed to safely operate your Organization. ecomms@ebg.com
- **New federal guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issues on May 28 permits employers to develop policies which require employees who enter the workplace to receive a COVID-19 vaccination providing those policies comply with the reasonable accommodation provisions of**

Updated June 10, 2021

the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and any other relevant statutes.

- Under the new guidance, employers are permitted to offer incentives to employees to employees to confirm they have received a COVID-19 vaccine, as long as the incentives are not so substantial as to be coercive. Employers may also offer incentives to employees to get their family members vaccinated.
- Information about this information is located at the following EEOC link within a comprehensive listing of FAQ's for employers in relation to practices surrounding COVID.
<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>
- CDC advises fully vaccinated staff can socialize together in break rooms and conduct in- person meetings without *source control* or physical distancing. However, if unvaccinated staff are present, everyone should wear source control and unvaccinated staff should physically distance from others.
 - *Source control*: Well-fitting facemasks, or respirators covering your mouth and nose to prevent spread of respiratory secretions when breathing, talking, sneezing, or coughing.

Testing: Two Types of Testing Available

- **Viral testing**: Confirm a current infection and need to be processed in a laboratory and time to results can vary (~1–3 days), but some NAATs are point-of-care tests with results available in about 15–45 minutes.
- **Point of Care Rapid Antigen Testing**: Allows for rapid (15-30 minutes) identification of infected people, thus preventing further virus transmission in the community, workplace (nursing home), etc. May need confirmatory testing with viral test as less sensitive (more false negative results) compared to the viral test, especially among asymptomatic people. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html#VaccinationSARSTesting> May 17, 2021
- Organizations may be able to conduct POC Rapid Antigen Testing: Contact your health department for interpretation of your organization's ability to conduct testing, required CLIA waiver.
<https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/Downloads/CLIASA.pdf>

Testing: CDC Recommendations for Staff Diagnostic COVID-19 Testing -fully vaccinated and unvaccinated:

- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, *regardless of vaccination status*, should receive a viral test immediately.
- CDC recommends that asymptomatic healthcare staff with a higher-risk exposure, regardless of vaccination status, should have a series of two viral tests for SARS-CoV-2 infection. Testing is recommended immediately and 5–7 days after exposure.
 - Higher risk exposure is not wearing appropriate PPE and being within 6 ft of a person for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hr. period, and that person has confirmed COVID-19, or the COVID-19 is confirmed within 14 days of being with that person.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Fully vaccinated staff providing care in a nursing home may be subject to testing during an outbreak. The federal regulations addressing the scope and frequency of testing are in addition to any state required testing and any facility-specific testing. The federal publication with detail has been updated 4/27/21. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/gso-20-38-nh.pdf>

May 27, 2021: Note: Prior receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine will not affect the results of SARS-CoV-2 viral tests.

Higher Risk Exposure and Fully Vaccinated Staff Work Restrictions:

- Higher Risk Exposure: Fully vaccinated staff with a higher-risk exposure and who are asymptomatic do not need to be restricted from work for 14 days following their exposure.
- Fully vaccinated staff who travel should continue to follow CDC travel recommendations and requirements, including restriction from work, when recommended for any traveler.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html> May 19, 2021.

Symptom Based Strategy to Discontinue Isolation and Return to Work:

- Most persons with COVID-19, can end isolation and precautions 10 days after *symptom onset* and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without using fever reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath).
 - *Symptom onset* is the date symptoms first began, including non-respiratory symptoms.

Note: Some persons with severe illness may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days that warrants extending duration of isolation and precautions for up to 20 days after symptom onset; consider consultation with an infection control expert.

Ending Isolation of Asymptomatic People Testing Positive for COVID 19, Options

- At least 10 days have passed since the date of their positive viral test.
- Check with your health department to ensure you know their requirements.

Options to CDC 14-day Quarantine That *Public Health Authorities May Put in Place:*

End Quarantine After Day 10 Without Testing	End Quarantine After Day 7 – <i>Diagnostic Testing Required</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of symptoms reported with daily monitoring from the start to day 10. • Post-quarantine transmission risk ranges from 1% to 10% • Symptom monitoring continues through day 14, any changes – self-isolate and be tested. • Consistent mask use and social distancing, hand cough hygiene, environmental disinfecting, adequate ventilation, avoid crowds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of symptoms reported with daily monitoring from the start to day 7. • End only by negative Pt-PCR testing, specimen may be collected and tested 48 hrs. before day 7, but quarantine cannot be ended before day 7. • Post-quarantine transmission risk is 5-12% • Required consistent mask use and social distancing, hand cough hygiene, environmental disinfecting, adequate ventilation, avoid crowds.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>

Dec 2, 2020

Updated June 10, 2021

- **For persons who develop new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the 3 months after the date of initial symptom onset**, and an alternative etiology cannot be identified by a provider, the CDC recommends consultation with an infectious disease or infection control expert and retesting may be indicated.
- **Admitting COVID 19 Patients to Home Care:** COVID 19 patients continue to be referred to home health, private duty/home care, and hospice organizations across the country. If you accept COVID-19 patients for care or services, please consider the following questions shared by call participants:
 - **Ask staff who agrees to care for a COVID 19 patient.** Organizations report that not all staff will, and some staff have resigned rather than face the prospect.
 - **How much PPE do you have and need** (e.g., face shields, gloves, gowns, N95 masks)? **CDC offers a PPE ‘burn rate calculator:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/hcp/ppestrategy/burn-calculator.html> (April 7, 2020)

Will staff see only COVID 19 patients each day, or mixed with those who are not suspected or confirmed COVID 19? This decision impacts your PPE inventory.

- **At referral request the COVID 19 status and vaccination status of each patient/client:** CHAP recommends adding the question about each patient’s COVID 19 status (confirmed, pending testing results, COVID symptoms) as well as vaccination status (Brand, shot date(s)) to your referral acceptance process – it is critical to the health of the patient, their family, and your staff.
 - If the patient has confirmed or suspected COVID 19, remember to get orders for any specific symptom monitoring or intervention for the COVID 19 diagnosis, as well as care for other chronic illnesses.
 - Obtain information how long transmission-based precautions must be maintained or how you will know that the patient/client is no longer considered infectious. Meeting criteria for discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions is not a prerequisite for discharge.

OSHA

April 29, 2021: Department of Labor is awaiting COVID Workplace Safety Rule Approval by OMB – the Rules would be released by OSHA in May 2021 and likely be effective immediately.

- COVID 19 National Emphasis Program launched by Federal OSHA with targeted inspections beginning in April in response to adverse events reported. . By May 12, 2021 State programs are to inform OSHA of their intent on oversight of workplace COVID 19 risk. Targeting establishments that have workers with increased potential exposure to COVID19.
- The importance of good faith efforts during the pandemic. <https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-16/discretion-enforcement-when-considering-employers-good-faith-efforts-during>

Updated June 10, 2021

- COVID 19 as an OSHA Form 300 recordable illness, watch for guidelines in new rule. Current policy - https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-05-19/revised-enforcement-guidance-recording-cases-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#_ftn4
- OSHA notes the importance of fit-testing during the pandemic: <https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-08/expanded-temporary-enforcement-guidance-respiratory-protection-fit-testing-n95>
- OSHA emphasizes having implemented a COVID 19 Prevention Program – YOU HAVE THIS DO NOT DO MORE WORK -
- OSHA’s key elements of a COVID 19 Prevention Program: 1) conduct a hazard assessment (ongoing attention to infection risk in the community); 2) identifying a combination of measures that limit the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace (all precautions implemented and PPE including contingency and crisis approaches); 3) adopting measures to ensure that workers who are infected or potentially infected are separated and sent home from the workplace (symptom logs, quarantine procedures, evidence of time off). 4) ensure workers have access to supplies needed at no cost.
<https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework#implementing-protections> January 2021

NOTE: 21 States and Puerto Rico have OSHA State Plans that meet and exceed federal OSHA and are federal OSHA approved. Check with your State Plan if listed:

Alaska	Kentucky	North Carolina	Vermont
Arizona	Maryland	Oregon	Virginia
California	Michigan	Puerto Rico	Washington
Hawaii	Minnesota	South Carolina	Wyoming
Indiana	Nevada	Tennessee	
Iowa	New Mexico	Utah	

P

PPE:

- **Accessing PPE, the National Declaration of an Emergency distributes PPE via two (2) sources:**
 - **the county and state health departments** – access to the national supply stockpile is distributed from health departments on a governor’s requests:
 - Contact your state or local health department to request supplies.
 - Also contact your state associations for information about accessing supplies –
 - When ordering N95 respirators have the model number of the masks fit-tested for your staff. If no model number, provide the manufacturer and year from a mask you have.
- **Update ASPR Regional Health Care Coalitions Areas and Contact Person for Resources:** Health care coalitions (HCC) are groups of health care and response organizations – such as acute care hospitals,

Updated June 10, 2021

emergency medical service (EMS) providers, emergency management agencies, public health agencies, and more – working in a defined geographic location to prepare for and respond to disasters and emergencies.

HCCs collaborate to ensure each member has what it needs to respond to emergencies and planned events, including medical equipment and supplies, real-time information, communication systems, and education. Website now allows identification of the coalition serving your area and a contact person.

- <https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/hpp/Pages/find-hc-coalition.aspx> February 2 2021

- **Maximizing PPE:** – the CDC website offer specific recommendations to maximize the use of 5 categories of PPE used in the home. Note: information is often written with the inpatient setting in mind. Not all categories will apply to care in the home, but many do. Anticipate how to make these protections work in the home care setting.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html> (July 20, 2020)

PPE Burn Rate Calculator: Excel Spreadsheets, instruction video and guidance for each type of PPE.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/burn-calculator.html>

Eye Protection: (NOTE CDC recognizes Face Shields AND Goggles as Eye Protection)

- **Conventional Capacity: Your Organization's Usual practice with an adequate supply (Goggles, Face Shield)**

The purpose of eye protection is used to protect staff eyes from exposure to splashes, sprays, splatter, and respiratory secretions for all patient encounters when there is moderate to substantial community transmission of SARS-CoV-2).

CDC recommends shifting eye protection supplies to reusable devices (i.e., reusable face shields or goggles).

- Disposable eye protection (e.g., face shields and goggles, should be removed and discarded after use.
 - Re-useable eye protection should be cleaned and disinfected after each patient encounter.
- **Contingency Capacity –expected temporary expected shortage, begin implementing extended use.**
Extended use of eye protection is a staff member wearing the same eye protection for repeated close contact with several *different patients, without removing eye protection between patient encounters.*
 - In an expected shortage, a disposable face shield or goggles should be dedicated to one staff member and cleaned and disinfected whenever visibly soiled or when removed and prior to putting it back on.
 - Face shields or goggles should be discarded if damaged (e.g., face shield or goggles can no longer fasten securely to the provider, if staff cannot see clearly, and cleaning does not restore visibility).
 - If staff touch their eye protection or adjust it, they must immediately perform hand hygiene.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Staff should leave the patient care area if they need to remove their eye protection.
- **Crisis Capacity: Per CDC these practices do not meet US standards of care but are implemented during known periods of shortages of eye protection for staff.**
 - Use the face shield or goggles beyond manufacturer shelf-life date (most often found on the label of either)
 - Implement extended use for staff whose care activities require prolonged (more than 15 minutes) face-to-face or close contact with a *potentially infectious patient* for which eye protection is recommended.
 - As an alternative, CDC advises to consider using safety glasses (e.g., trauma glasses) that have extensions to cover the side of the eyes. However, if these have gaps between glasses and the face, they likely do not protect eyes from all splashes and sprays.
 - Exclude staff who are at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 infection from care of patients with *suspected or confirmed* infection.

Treat glasses and goggles like medical devices - Cleaning per manufacturer guidelines, use gloves to clean, and store in a clean or dirty area so staff know what is clean and what dirty for re-use.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/eye-protection.html> Dec 22, 2020

Gloves

- **Glove types:** There are two (2) primary types are used in health care, sterile surgical gloves and disposable medical gloves or patient examination gloves, referenced as “Examination” gloves most often.
- Home health, home care (private duty), palliation, hospice and home infusion use non-sterile disposable examination gloves. ‘Specialty’ examination gloves often are chemotherapy gloves, which have been tested with chemotherapy agents.
- **Glove product codes** represent the material used in manufacturing; the following is per the FDA:

Latex – (LYY)	Vinyl – (LYZ)	Synthetic Polymer – (LZA)
Nitrile – (LZA)	Specialty – (LZC)	Finger Cot – (LZB)

Surgical gloves have a product code (NGO) to avoid ordering the wrong product when not needed.

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/medical-gloves-covid-19> (September 3, 2020)

- **Conventional Capacity: Your Organization’s Usual practice with an adequate supply**
Continued use of FDA-cleared disposable medical gloves following standard and transmission-based and when indicated for other exposures such as handling cleaning chemicals.
 - Reinforce indications and recommended practices for non-sterile disposable glove use, and how and where gloves are to be disposed.
 - Remind staff about indications for gloves use, as well as common situations when gloves may *not* be needed. (conserve PPE)

Updated June 10, 2021

- Prioritize medical gloves for handling chemotherapy agents (chemotherapy gloves) for staff handling chemotherapy and other hazardous drugs. Ensure staff and operations know which drugs meet this qualification to ensure adequate PPE.
- **Contingency Capacity –expected temporary expected shortage.**
Use gloves past their manufacturer-designated shelf life for training activities
Non-sterile disposable gloves cleared by FDA are not required to have expiration date labeling; however, some manufacturers choose to designate a shelf life.
 - If a manufactured date is noted, the FDA recommends not using the gloves if more than 5 years since that date.
 - CDC advises using disposable medical gloves that are *like* FDA-cleared examination gloves and approved under other U.S. or international standards. Examples are shown in the Table at the following website. You would be looking for ‘Examination’ gloves.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/gloves.html> (December 23, 2020)
- **Crisis Capacity: Per CDC these practices do not meet US standards of care but are implemented during known periods of gloves shortage. Implement extended use.**
 - Use gloves past their manufacturer-designated shelf life.
 - Prioritize non-sterile disposable gloves for use to protect hands from contact with potentially hazardous substances, including blood and body fluids (e.g., wound care, aerosol generating procedures).
 - Extended use of disposable medical gloves by staff refers to the practice of wearing gloves without changing them between patients or tasks. Gloves can remain on but must be sanitized between patients to prevent cross transmission from patient to patient.
 - *During a glove supply crisis gloves, can be used up to 4 hours continuously, but must be cleaned between patients to prevent cross transmission from patient to patient.*

CDC offers two (2) means for re-use of disposable medical gloves in a time of inadequate supply.

- 1) Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizer (ABHS):** If not visibly soiled, disposable latex and nitrile glove brands maintain their integrity when disinfected for up to six (6) applications of ABHS or until the gloves become otherwise contaminated or ineffective (wear, tears, etc.). Follow hand hygiene guidance for proper application of ABHS.
- 2) Soap and water** can be used to clean donned, disposable medical gloves between tasks or patients. Long-cuffed surgical gloves are recommended as washing may be impractical for short, cuffed gloves where water may become trapped inside the worn gloves which then must be discarded. Disposable medical gloves can be cleaned with soap and water up to 10 times or until the gloves become otherwise contaminated or ineffective. Follow hand hygiene guidance for proper soap and water hand hygiene procedures.

Discard disposable medical or examination gloves always after:

- Visible soiling or contamination with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other body fluids.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Any signs of damage (e.g., holes, rips) or degradation are observed; and
- *Maximum of four (4) hours of continuous use.*
- Doffing previously removed gloves should not be re-donned as the risk of tearing and contamination increases. Disposable glove “re-use” should NOT be performed.
- After removing gloves for any reason, hand hygiene should be performed with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/gloves.html> (December 23, 2020)

N95 Masks - Particulate filtering facepiece respirators

- There are two types of respirators, standard N95 and surgical N95. You need only N95 or equivalent.
- Respirators are for healthcare staff who need protection from both: 1) airborne droplets and 2) fluid as the close fit is to avoid permeation of both.

KN95 NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety) Sampling identifies KN95 Masks that do not meet basic filtering standards, and in some cases are counterfeit.

- NIOSH developed tests to assess the filter efficiency and penetration (>95%) of a sample of respirators represented as certified by an international certification authority. NIOSH states that usual testing was not done previously due to the respirator shortage associated with COVID-19.
- NIOSH samples identified products that failed filtering tests.
- NIOSH has provided a table at the link below to identify the manufacturer and filtering test results. The table is regularly updated, even daily.
 - NIOSH warns of respirator masks with an ear loop design. NIOSH-approved N95s typically have head bands. Limited assessment of ear loop designs indicate difficulty achieving a proper fit.
 - NIOSH advises that while the manufacturer listed in the table at the link below is the manufacturer of record, NIOSH has been informed that some of these are counterfeit products. Some products with legitimate manufacturer names, showing poor filter penetration results (<95%), are counterfeit products.

Updated NIOSH website: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/respirators/testing/NonNIOSHresults.html>

August 7, 2020

3M N95 Respirator Masks Fraud Remains Serious

The FBI, FDA and the 3M company continue to warn about large scale counterfeit 3M N95 masks. The counterfeit masks can be difficult to identify. 3M has taken the following action to reduce the fraud.

- Several 3M respirator masks are equipped with the 3M™ Safeguard™ Product Authentication Process. This allows you to verify if the product you have is authentic.
 - Visit the 3M Safe Guard Authentication website(https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/worker-health-safety-us/3m-safeguard/) for authentication instructions by model number.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Basically, on the bottom of each authentic box of 3M respirators equipped with 3M Safe Guard are two codes a Secure Code and a Lot Code. Both are needed to authenticate the product. If your product is authentic, there is a green check mark message during the authentication check.
 - If any other mark appears, contact 3M anti-fraud hotline (1-800-426-8688 in the U.S.). The hotline is also available to answer any questions or concerns.
- **Conventional Capacity: Your Organization's Usual practice with an adequate supply of N95 masks**
N95 respirators can be considered for source control by staff to cover one's mouth and nose to prevent spread of respiratory secretions when they are talking, sneezing, or coughing. When used for this purpose, N95s may be used until they become soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through. They should be immediately discarded after removal.
 - Extended use strategy for N-95 being used as PPE should **NOT** be used when an organization is in conventional capacity mode. Exhalation Valves on Respirator Masks

Contingency Capacity Strategies for N-95 Masks

- Respirators are to be prioritized for staff who are using them as PPE over those staff who are using them for source control.
- Extended use strategy is permitted in contingency capacity, however, the N95 should be discarded immediately after being removed.

Crisis Capacity Strategies

- Staff should no longer utilize non-NIOSH approved respirators developed by manufacturers who are not NIOSH-approval holders.
- The number of re-uses of an N-95 should be limited to no more than 5 donnings per device by the same staff member. To ensure adequate respirator performance, staff should always inspect the respirator and perform a seal check upon donning a re-used respirator. N-95 and other disposable respirators should not be shared by multiple staff.
- **Note that each re-use of N95 respirators requires 2 pair of gloves**, a clean pair of gloves when donning or adjusting a previously worn N95 respirator. Then discarding these gloves and performing hand hygiene after the N95 respirator is donned or adjusted and using a new pair of gloves for care.
- **Use of a cleanable face shield or facemask over the respirator** can extend respirator use as it reduces/prevents contamination of the N95 respirator.
 - Reuse can also be extended by putting a surgical mask on the patient.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html> April 9, 2021

Staff reuse of N95 Masks with presumptive or confirmed COVID-19 patients: Two sources of information on reuse:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html> (April 22, 2020)

Updated June 10, 2021

- NIOSH the National institutes of Occupational Safety
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html> (March 27,2020)

Discard: N95 respirators if:

- contaminated with patient blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids or obviously damaged or becomes hard to breathe through; or
 - inadvertent contact is made with the inside of respirator.
- NOTE: Respiratory pathogens on the respirator surface can potentially be transferred by touch to the wearer's hands, increasing the risk of causing infection through subsequent touching of the mucous membranes of the face -

Face Masks

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/mask-fit-and-filtration.html>

CDC recommendations for “double masking” is based on the widespread COVID-19 variants some of which appear to spread more quickly and easily than the COVID-19 virus identified in early 2020.

- CDC recommendation are based on 4 factors:
 - How well a mask fits around the nose and below the eyes, and on the sides.
 - How well it filters air.
 - How many layers it has, and?
 - What mask to wear when, for example around people you do or do not know.
- **Cloth Masks: What to look for:**
 - Look for a cloth mask that is made of multiple layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric.
 - Make sure the cloth mask blocks light from coming through the fabric if held up to a bright light.
 - Does it have gaps around the sides of the face or nose? If so, it fits poorly and can allow respiratory droplets containing the virus to leak in and out around the mask.

What you can do: Layered a cloth mask on top of a medical procedure mask (forming a “double mask”) for better fit and air filtration. Using a mask fitter or brace can also help to the improve fit of a cloth mask.

- **Surgical Masks sold as “disposable face masks” for 1-time community use: What to Look For**
 - Check the labels to ensure that they are made of *multi-layered*, non-woven material.
 - Look at the fit which is often poor fit as there are gaps around the nose and along the sides of the face, where respiratory droplets containing the virus can leak in and out.

Updated June 10, 2021

What You Can Do: A medical procedure mask can be layered underneath a cloth mask (forming a “double mask”) for better fit and air filtration. NOTE: a surgical mask should not be layered underneath a surgical mask. A mask fitter or brace can also help to improve fit around the face.

- **KN95 Masks (also known as KN95 Respirators): What to Look For**

KN95 masks are a type of filtering facepiece respirator that are commonly made and used in China. KN95 masks can be preferred mask to wear in situations that require prolonged close contact (less than 6 ft, for longer than 15 minutes) with people who do not live in the same household, or for people who are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- **NOTE: When fitting properly these masks filter up to 95% of particles. BUT!!** many counterfeit (fake) KN95 masks are available, and sometimes it is hard to tell if they meet the right requirements just by looking at them. At least 60% of the KN95 masks evaluated by NIOSH did not meet the requirements that they claim to meet.

What You Can Do: use a KN95 mask identified on the FDA Emergency Use Authorization List <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-euas#appendixasurgicalmasks>
2/9/21

Surgical Mask Use:

- **Conventional Capacity: Your Organization’s Usual practice with an adequate supply**

Facemasks are used by healthcare staff for 2 general purposes:

- As PPE to protect their nose and mouth from exposure to splashes, sprays, splatter, and respiratory secretions. When used for this purpose, facemasks should be removed and discarded after each patient.
- When used to cover one’s mouth and nose to prevent spread of respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing, facemasks may be used until they become soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through. They should be immediately discarded after removal.

FDA-cleared surgical masks are designed to protect against splashes and sprays and are prioritized for use when such exposures are anticipated, including surgical procedures. Facemasks that are not regulated by FDA, such as some procedure masks, which are typically used for isolation purposes, may not provide protection against splashes and sprays.

- **Contingency Capacity –expected temporary expected shortage – implement extended use.**

Extended use of facemasks is the practice of staff wearing the same facemask during encounters with several different patients, without removing the facemask between.

- The facemask is discarded whenever it is removed, and always at the end of each workday.
- The facemask is removed and discarded if it is soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- Staff must take care not to touch their facemask. If they touch or adjust it, they must immediately perform hand hygiene.
- HCP should leave the patient care area if they need to remove the facemask.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Staff who wear a mask to cover one's mouth and nose to prevent spread of respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing may use a cloth mask.
- Instead of providing a facemask to patients not already wearing their own cloth mask for source control, have them use tissues or other barriers to cover their mouth and nose.

Crisis Capacity: Per CDC these practices do not meet US standards of care but are implemented during known periods of shortage. Implement limited re-use with extended use.

- Pairing limited re-use of facemasks with extended use is one staff member using the same facemask for multiple patient contacts but removing it after several contacts and redonning it for further patient contacts.
- Ensure that staff do not touch outer surfaces of the mask during care, and that mask removal and replacement be done in a careful and deliberate manner.
- There is not a known maximum number of uses (donning) of the same facemask.
- The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- Facemasks that fasten to the face by using ties may not be able to be undone without tearing and should be considered only for extended use, not re-re-use.
- Facemasks with elastic ear hooks may be the best for re-use.

Staff should leave patient care area if they need to remove the facemask. It should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.

When No Facemasks are Available:

- Use a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face with no facemask.
- If neither respirators nor facemasks are available, staff might use cloth masks as a last resort for care of patients with suspected or confirmed diagnosis for which facemask or respirator use is normally recommended. Caution should be exercised when considering this option. Cloth masks should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/face-masks.html> November 23, 2020

FDA Surgical Face Masks:

The FDA issued an umbrella emergency use authorization (EUA) for certain disposable, single-use surgical masks that meet certain performance requirements for use in any healthcare settings when used by staff to provide a physical barrier to fluids and particulate materials to prevent exposure to respiratory droplets and large particles.

Surgical masks that have been confirmed by the FDA as meeting criteria under the EUA are included in Appendix A as authorized surgical masks and the list is updated regularly.

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-euas> February 1, 2021

Updated June 10, 2021**Gowns: CDC recommending Use of Disposable and Cloth Isolation Gowns**

Gowns should be worn for aerosol-generating procedures such as suctioning, nebulizer treatments, and other care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated, and high-contact patient care activities that provide opportunities for transfer of pathogens to the hands and clothing of healthcare providers.

Conventional Capacity: Usual practice with anticipated adequate supply of gowns

The CDC encourages employers to consider several fluid-resistant and impermeable protective clothing options.

- Nonsterile *disposable patient isolation gowns* used for routine patient care are appropriate for use by staff when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Reusable (i.e., washable) gowns are also accepted for routine use, and typically made of polyester or polyester-cotton fabrics. Gowns made of these fabrics can be safely laundered after each use according to routine procedures and reused.
 - Routinely inspect gowns for rips or being too thin.
 - Ensure clean gowns stored so clean gowns are easily identifiable.

Emergency Use Authorization for Isolation Gowns: Using ANSI/AAMI PB70 standard disposal gowns: Level 1 or 2 gowns (non-surgical isolation gowns) is recommended when there is low risk of contamination. <https://www.fda.gov/media/138326/download> May 20, 2020

Contingency Capacity – Temporary, expected shortage of gown, implement extended use.

Limit the use of isolation gowns:

- To patients with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infections during aerosol generating procedures; and
- during patient activities that involve close and prolonged contact with the patient or their immediate environment (e.g., dressing, bathing/showering, transferring, providing hygiene, changing linens, changing briefs, or assisting with toileting, device care or use, and wound care).

NOTE: use of surgical gowns as isolation gowns requires changing gowns between patients and consideration of which surgical gown is used as they provide different levels of protection

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/protectiveclothing/>

Crisis Capacity: The practices are known not to meet US standards of care but are implemented in the care of patients during known periods of shortages.

- Extend the use of isolation gowns (disposable or reusable) by having staff wear the same gown when interacting with more than one patient housed in the same location and known to be infected with the same infectious disease (e.g., all COVID 19 patients).
 - Re-use of the same gown with >1 patient can be considered **only** if there are no additional co-infectious diagnoses that can be transmitted by contact (such as *Clostridioides difficile*, *Candida Auris*).
 - A gown being used becomes visibly soiled, it must be removed and discarded or changed.

Updated June 10, 2021

- Per the CDC, in situations of severely limited or no available isolation gowns, the following clothing can be considered as a last resort for care of COVID-19 patients as single use. None of these options can be considered PPE, since their capability to protect HCP is unknown. CDC recommends using this clothing if it has long sleeves and closures (snaps, buttons) that can be fastened and secured.
 - Disposable laboratory coats
 - Reusable (washable) patient gowns
 - Reusable (washable) laboratory coats
 - Disposable aprons
 - Combinations of pieces of clothing can be considered for activities that may involve high amounts of body fluids and when there are no gowns available.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/isolation-gowns.html> Jan 21, 2021

Ongoing FDA Hand Sanitizer Alert: The FDA encourages health care professionals, consumers and patients to report adverse events or quality problems experienced with the use of hand sanitizers to FDA's MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program.

- The FDA list to check if your hand sanitizer is a product you should use:
<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/your-hand-sanitizer-fdas-list-products-you-should-not-use>

R

Resources:

- Links to resources found on the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) website <https://www.capc.org/> are free for all providers. COVID 19 resources of interest include:
 - Understanding Distress in the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - A Framework for Coping with Moral Challenges In the COVID-19 Era
- HHS resources for reaching out to diverse communities: <https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/>
- CMS site dedicated to COVID-19 Vaccine Policies and Guidance: <https://www.cms.gov/COVIDvax>
- COVID-19 Community Champions – CMS video highlighting the change of long-term care staff from those uncertain about receiving the vaccine to encouraging their peers to do so: <https://youtu.be/k0WbAhveyDY>
- Medicare publications in several languages: <https://www.medicare.gov/about-us/information-in-other-languages>
- Information regarding the administration of monoclonal antibodies in the home: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/covid-19/monoclonal-antibody-covid-19-infusion>
- Partner resources from CMS including communications, toolkits and resources from HHS and CDC to be used for patient education or training of staff. <https://www.cms.gov/outreach-education/partner-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-partner-resources>

Updated June 10, 2021**S****Schools: What we Know about COVID Safety in Schools**

- Children can be infected with COVID-19 and spread the virus to others. However, children are less likely to develop severe illness or die from COVID-19.⁶
- <10% of COVID-19 cases in the United States have been among children and adolescents aged 5–17 years old, about the same % as with other viruses.
 - Younger children (<10 years of age) may be less likely to be infected than adolescents.
- Studies identify those children and adolescents with highest risk for hospitalization:
 - Males, Hispanic ethnicity and black race, average age 8 yrs. old
 - Underlying medical conditions are also more commonly reported among children who are hospitalized or admitted to an ICU.¹⁶

In-Person Learning Among Children is NOT associated with Causing Community Transmission of the COVID-19 now evident in studies of in-person schooling Europe and now the US.

- Outbreaks do occur in schools, but multiple studies show that transmission or spread of the COVID-19 virus within school settings is typically *lower than – or at least* like the levels of transmission or spread in your community - when prevention strategies are in place in schools.
- It is called “**layered protection**” in schools: masks, physical distancing, handwashing, and respiratory etiquette (cough and sneezing), cleaning, ventilation and contact tracing. For example, if a report a parent ill and it is confirmed, the child quarantines for 14 days with the family.

3 Three Foot Distancing? International and U.S. studies suggests layered protection even with physical distancing of less than 6ft is still effective is effective in reducing risk for spreading COVID 19.

- Recommendations from WHO⁶⁴ and the American Academy of Pediatrics state using a distance of at least 3 feet between students in classrooms could provide a reasonable definition of physical distancing so long as other prevention measures are maximized – the layered protection.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/transmission_k_12_schools.html March 19, 2021

Staff Stress and Compassion Fatigue:

Providing care to others during the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. How you and your team cope with these emotions can affect your well-being, the care you give to others while doing your job, and the well-being of the people you care about outside of work.

In a Pandemic the Mental Health Issue is Duration: Experiencing or witnessing life threatening events impacts everyone differently. People may experience clinically significant distress or impairment, such as acute stress disorder, PTSD, or secondary traumatic stress (also known as vicarious traumatization). Compassion fatigue may also result from chronic workplace stress and exposure to traumatic events during the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-lifecoping/managing-stress-anxiety.html> July 1, 2020

Updated June 10, 2021

What You Can Do - First Identify It: Recognize the symptoms of stress

- Feeling irritation, anger, or denial
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Feeling helpless or powerless
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out.
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Learning to Manage Your Reactions:

Focus on 4 Core Components for Self-Management:

- 1) adequate sleep and rest
- 2) good nutrition, eat healthy meals,
- 3) regular physical activity and
- 4) active relaxation spend time outdoors relaxing when you can.

Talk to Yourself!

- Remind yourself that you are not the only one in an unusual situation with limited resources.
- Identify and accept those things which you do not have control over.
- Recognize that you are performing a crucial role in fighting this pandemic and that you are doing the best you can with the resources available. you share a sisterhood and brotherhood with caregivers like yourself across the world.

Take Control of Aspects of Your Daily Life:

- Keep a consistent daily routine when possible.
- Take breaks during your day to rest, stretch, or check in with *supportive* coworkers, family, etc.
- Do things you enjoy during non-work hours – the importance of taking time away from work.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting.
- ‘Wash Up’ at the end of the day, to ‘put away’ your work.
- Create ceremonies or rituals that allow you to focus your thoughts on letting go of stress or honoring a memory of something positive; seek moments of ‘joy’.
- Practice your spiritual beliefs, anyone can pray.
- If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment, and talk to your provider if you experience new or worsening symptoms.

Updated June 10, 2021

If concerned that you or someone in your household or you work with may harm themselves or someone else here are additional resources. If you share these, you never know when someone may use it.

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) Toll-free number 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
 - The [online Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) is free and confidential. You will be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) Call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
- Disaster Distress Hotline (SAMSHA) (Created for those working during disasters).
 - Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 6674.

Other sources American Institute of Stress <https://www.stress.org> has additional resources.

Staff Anxiety: Leadership, Manager and Supervision -What you can do:

Expect staff to demonstrate increased anxiety, if only as a natural reaction to a sustained period of no predictability that can or does impact all parts of our lives. *As leaders you can take action to make a difference for your team! The following is excerpted studies of the impact of the pandemic on health care staff here in the US and the UK.*

- Your leadership goal – reduce ambiguity for staff – they just want to know.
 - a. Double down on communication
 - b. Make it open and honest – their concern is financial security, physical safety, etc.
- Acknowledge that you know that their job is stressful, and **they are** essential workers/heroes. Underscore the value of what they do -they let people stay at home-where we all want to be.
- What roadblocks can you remove? They may have ideas.
- Ensure that your team knows about mental health coverage as part of their benefits or access to these in the community (Noted at the end of the preceding information).
 - a. If you have a wellness program, use it for self-care, self-help virtual sessions with experts. Your goal is to reduce the stigma for asking for help.
 - b. You may need to talk to some employees about seeking guidance.
- So, what else is effective:
 - a. Encourage supervisors and your management to check in with the team about things other than work.
 - b. Find more ways to express appreciation.
- c. Resolve conflicts quickly.

Updated June 10, 2021**T****Telehealth:****Use of Telehealth by Medicare Certified home health agencies.**

1. **A PRN telecommunication visit order** is permissible if it is accompanied by a description of the patient's medical signs and symptoms requiring the visit and a specific limit on the number of those visits to be made before an additional physician or allowed practitioner order is needed. Orders for care may indicate a specific range in frequency of visits to ensure that the most appropriate level of services is furnished. If a range of visits is ordered the upper limit of the range is considered the specific frequency.
- **Comprehensive Assessments and Updates to the Comprehensive Assessment:** Audio only or two-way audio-video telecommunication comprehensive assessment or an update to the assessment can be used if it is part of the patient's plan of care. Telecommunications cannot substitute for in-person visits as ordered on the plan of care.
- **Plan of care Changes as the type of visits change,** noting which visits will be made in person and which visits will be conducted via telecommunication technology.
- Expectations:
 - **Education** of patients as to the processes the agency has in place to protect patients as well as home care staff.
 - Not everything can be accomplished per telecommunication when skilled care is required.
 - Work closely with the patient and their family to determine what would reassure them that in-person visits with the staff are safe.
- If the **patient continues to refuse** any in-person visits as per the plan of care, the agency will have to determine if the patient's medical, nursing, rehabilitation and social needs can be met in their place of residence. Per §484.60 <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/03092020-covid-19-faqs-508.pdf> (page 57) Updated 6/2/2020
- **Hospice:** Hospice providers can provide services to a Medicare patient receiving routine home care through telecommunications technology (e.g., remote patient monitoring; telephone calls (audio only and TTY); and 2-way audio-video technology), if it is feasible and appropriate to do so. Only in person visits are to be recorded on the hospice claim.
- Face-to-face encounters for purposes of patient recertification for the Medicare hospice benefit can now be conducted via telehealth (i.e., 2-way audio-video telecommunications technology that allows for real-time interaction between the hospice physician/hospice nurse practitioner and the patient).

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-hospices.pdf> (5/15/2020)

Updated June 10, 2021**Hospice FAQ Telehealth Answers and Expectations:**

- Initial and Comprehensive Assessments
 - Due to the role of the assessment as the foundation of the plan of care and crucial to establishing the hospice-patient relationship, the expectation is that in most situations, the initial and comprehensive assessments would be done in person. Especially for assessment of skin/wound care, uncontrolled pain/symptoms, effective teaching of patient/caregiver medication administration, etc.)
 - It would be up to the clinical judgment of hospice as to whether such technology can meet the patient's/caregiver's/family's needs and the use of technology should be included on the plan of care for the patient and family.

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/03092020-covid-19-faqs-508.pdf> Page 68 (Updated 6/2/2020)

Medicaid and Private Insurance Payment for Telehealth: If hospice and/or home health can bill for telehealth is dependent upon the state flexibilities and the program itself. Research should be conducted to determine when telehealth can be provided and if it is billable.

Paid telehealth visits by licensed practitioners. Medicare pays for office, hospital visits or visits to a patient's home furnished via telehealth. These visits can be conducted by doctors, nurse practitioners, clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and other licensed practitioners.

Home Health Emergency Access to Telehealth (HEAT Act) has been reintroduced in the senate to allow for CMS to have authority to issue waivers that would enable billing for home health agencies of telehealth visits during a public health emergency.

Telehealth options:

- **Types of telehealth communications:**
 - Telehealth: refers to a broader scope of remote health care services than telemedicine as in addition to remote clinician services between a provider and patient/client, it also refers to remote non-clinical services such as clinician to clinician consults, patient education services, and interprofessional care team communications
 - Telemedicine: practice of delivering medicine using technology to deliver care at a distance. A physician/clinician in one location uses a telecommunications infrastructure to deliver care to a patient at a distant site. This is a subset of telehealth.
 - Remote patient monitoring refers to using technology to gather patient data outside of the traditional health care setting to monitor a patient's condition while they are at home. This is also a subset of telehealth and includes such devices as glucometers and digital scales.
 - mHealth: is abbreviated for mobile health and refers to the subset of telehealth that uses mobile technologies. Examples include apps and peripheral devices designed for use on smart

Updated June 10, 2021

phones and tablet. Can be used for videoconferencing, gathering patient data, or providing patient education.

Getting Started:

- What is the state requirement related to patient consent to use telehealth?
 - If verbal consent is obtained, a witness is appropriate, and the consent should be documented within the clinical record.
- Does the organization provide service under who may allow telehealth billing?
- How will telehealth be provided?
- Develop protocols for the delivery of telehealth visits
 - How will the type of interaction be determined?
 - How will education be provided to patients/family related to the visits?
 - Who is responsible for scheduling and does a link need to be sent?
 - How will the visit documentation be done?
 - How will emergency/on call needs be addressed?

Virtual Visit Etiquette

- Start the visit by confirming the patient/family can see and hear. Make a clear verbal transition to the start of the clinical visit. Such as “How are you doing?”
- Let the patient/family know they can interrupt if they need to pause or adjust during the visit. • Confirm that you will call them if sound, or video is lost during the visit
- For the 1st visit provide an overview of the visit.
 - The amount of visit time.
 - What is to be accomplished during the visit
 - Discuss any concerns or symptoms being experienced
 - Review of medications and need for refills. The plan for the next visit
- If responding from home, find a quiet location with a neutral background and good lighting.
- Always dress appropriately and wear plain clothes as patterns can cause nausea from the screen.
- Speak slowly and clearly and check every so often to ensure that you are being heard.
- Remember to look at the camera on your own device (not at the screen that has the patient’s video)
- Call wrap up: Let the patient/family know when 5-10 minutes is left, and ask if there is information, they want to make sure to cover.
- End the visit by summarizing what you heard, what the plan is, reviewing medication needs. ○ Inform the patient if the next visit will be a virtual or in-person visit.

Telehealth Resources:

- Health and Human Services <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/getting-started/>
- Mid Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center: <https://www.matrc.org/matrc-telehealth-resources-for-covid-19/>

Updated June 10, 2021

Tips for Success:

- Look for changes in care provision practices to evaluate any potential negative effects on patients.
- Ensure plans of care include telecommunications if staff are using.
- Ensure orders are obtained to reflect any changes in care including the use of telecommunications.
- If utilizing telecommunication, a checklist can aid the clinician to remember the needs of the visit as they provide care.

Travel During the Pandemic:

The following tables provide direction related to domestic and international travel.

- The guidance explains differences in recommendations for those not vaccinated and those who are fully vaccinated.
- Fully vaccinated travelers are less likely to get and spread COVID-19.
 - Testing and self-quarantine is not needed if you are fully vaccinated OR have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months.

Domestic Travel Recommendations and Requirements	Not Vaccinated	Fully Vaccinated
Get tested 1-3 days before travel	✓	
Get tested 3-5 days after travel and self-quarantine for 7 days. Self-quarantine for 10 days if you don't get tested.	✓	
Self-monitor for symptoms	✓	✓
Wear a mask and take other precautions during travel	✓	✓

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/infographic/infographic-quick-reference.html>

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)		
International Travel RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS		
	Not Vaccinated	Fully Vaccinated
Get tested 1-3 days before traveling out of the US	✓	
Mandatory test required before flying to US	✓	✓
Get tested 3-5 days after travel	✓	✓
Self-quarantine after travel for 7 days with a negative test or 10 days without test	✓	
Self-monitor for symptoms	✓	✓
Wear a mask and take other precautions during travel	✓	✓



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

CS323515-A 04/02/2021

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>

<https://chapling.org/Account/Signin>

V

Sources to Access Vaccine in English and Spanish

Access to a vaccine should not be an obstacle for anyone. Three vaccine tools to share in your community for gaining access to a vaccine:

- 1) **Online:** Visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/> (English) or <https://www.vacunas.gov/> (Spanish) to search and find a vaccine available near you.
- 2) **Text:** Text your **zip code** to GETVAX (438829) for English or text your zip code to VACUNA (822862) for Spanish to receive three vaccine sites on your phone within seconds.
- 3) **Call:** National COVID-19 Vaccination Assistance Hotline at 1-800-232-0233 for those who prefer to get information via phone call.

Vaccine Communication Toolkits

- **Essential Worker Toolkit:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/toolkits/essential-workers.html>

May 27, 2021: Community-Based Organization Toolkit:

Updated June 10, 2021

Toolkits can be used to educate health care staff or community members about COVID-19 vaccines, raise awareness about the benefits of vaccination and address common questions and concerns. Updated to include adolescent vaccination, with a pediatric healthcare professional toolkit for vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/toolkits/community-organization.html> May 12, 2021

Tips for Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Conversation with Patients Can be Found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/engaging-patients.html> April 5, 2021

- HCP who has recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 3 months of a **higher-risk exposure** are also no longer required to quarantine if they remain asymptomatic.
- **NOTE:** HCP who have underlying immunocompromising conditions (e.g., organ transplantation, cancer treatment) which may impact the level of protection provided by the COVID-19 vaccine should continue to implement work restrictions if they have incurred a higher risk exposure.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>

- PPE usage remains unchanged for HCP who are fully vaccinated.

Vaccines What Do We Know and What Are We Still Learning

- **We know** that the 3 current COVID-19 vaccines in the US are effective at preventing COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness, and death.
 - Per the FDA, the vaccines may not protect everyone. These vaccines are not FDA licensed vaccines only emergency use authorization (EUA).
- **We know** that other prevention steps such as masks and social distancing help stop the spread of COVID-19, even as vaccines are being distributed.
- **We are still learning** how well COVID-19 vaccines keep people from spreading the disease.
- **We are still learning** how long immunity after vaccination will last, follow-up booster shots may be required in the winter months. Both Pfizer and Moderna began testing safety of boosters should a 3rd dose be needed.

“COVID-19 in 2021—Continuing Uncertainty” Carlos del Rio, MD1; Preeti Malani, MD, MSJ2,3 JAMA. 2021;325(14):1389-1390. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.3760 March 4, 2020

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html> March 9, 2021

- **We are still learning** how effective the vaccines are against COVID 19 variants. Early data show the vaccines may work against some variants but could be less effective against others.
- **We are still learning** about variants:
 - How the disease caused by these new variants differs from the disease caused by other variants that are currently circulating
 - How these variants may affect existing therapies, vaccines, and tests

A one- page summary for use by your staff is **available on the CHAP education website**. Your team has great influence on people’s choices to be vaccinated, especially patients who have conditions making them vulnerable to more severe disease.

Updated June 10, 2021**Designated COVID 19 Vaccinator Status as a Community-Based Organization**

- An HHA or hospice do not need to take any action to administer and bill for the COVID-19 vaccination, either through individual claims or roster bill, you are considered a mass immunizer. You will need to apply and be approved by your state or local health department to receive the vaccine. Contact the Immunization Program Manager now at your health department. Medicare payment for administering vaccinations:

<https://www.cms.gov/medicare/covid-19/medicare-covid-19-vaccine-shot-payment> March 15, 2021

- **How the vaccination is paid for:** Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars are given at no cost. Vaccination providers can charge administration fees for giving the shot.

Pay rate increases for COVID-19 vaccines administered on or after March 15, 2021 may be raised to \$40 to administer each dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The exact rate for administration of each dose depends on the type of entity provides the service and will be geographically adjusted based on where the service is furnished.

- o This is an increase from approximately \$28 to \$40 for the administration of single-dose vaccines, and an increase from approximately \$45 to \$80 for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines requiring two doses.
- **Additional pay rate increase for administering COVID-19 vaccinations in the home as of June 8, 2021.** CMS has added an additional \$35.00 to the previous increase of \$40.00 in March per administration of COVID-19 vaccine in a Medicare beneficiary's home which increases the total payment amount for at-home vaccination from approximately \$40 to about \$75. For a two-dose vaccine, the increase results in a total payment of approximately \$150. This increase accounts for the additional clinical time needed in the home following the vaccine administration and will be geographically adjusted based on where the service is furnished. The vaccine continues to be free of charge with no payment/copay to the beneficiary. More information can be found at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/covid-19/medicare-covid-19-vaccine-shot-payment>.
- o An organization making the decision to administer vaccines for their patients need to consider the appropriate vaccine storage, handling and administration. The following CDC website provides training materials and clinical resources for organizations. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/homebound-persons.html>
- A special CMS open door forum was held June 10 at 3 pm for the purpose of providing more information and answering questions on at-home COVID-19 vaccinations for Medicare beneficiaries. When an open door forum is held CMS often provides a podcast of the presentation available. Access the following website to search for this podcast. *(As of June 11, a podcast for this presentation has yet to be posted.)* <https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/OpenDoorForums/PodcastAndTranscripts>
-

Updated June 10, 2021

- **Expanded vaccinators-always remember to check state list:**

<https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/COVID19/COVIDvaccinators/Pages/default.aspx>

Vaccination providers can get the administration fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund external icon.

Vaccinating Homebound Patients – CDC Recommendations:

3 Elements Key to Vaccinating Homebound Patients in home health, hospice, and home care (private duty). **NOTE:** Organizations administering vaccine at home do assume additional responsibility, if you do not routinely do this, contact your liability insurer.

- **Training:**

CDC recommends that healthcare professionals become familiar with the COVID 19 vaccine that will be administered to ensure it is stored, handled, prepared, and administered correctly.

- **Who Do You Train?** Check who is licensed to administer vaccines in your state. Some states may have changed with the pandemic in mind, issuing state waivers to increase the availability of staff.
 - **Who needs to be trained:**
 - Experienced vaccinators as well as vaccinators who have not administered vaccines in the past 12 months or longer.
 - Support staff (not licensed to administer vaccines) who can assist with vaccine preparation and cold chain management such as data reporting, distribution of required materials to vaccine recipients, etc.
- CDC COVID 19 vaccination training and core competencies can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/training.html> Jan 27, 2021

Pre-Plan for Home Vaccination-What is Involved?

Estimate the number of doses needed as closely as possible by:

1. Contacting patients or their caregivers in advance to determine who wishes to be vaccinated.
2. Planning to use all doses in a vial - decide on a contingency plan to avoid vaccine waste.
3. Map out travel plans considering the time frames for vaccine use at different temperatures, factor in pre-vaccination preparation time, in-home time including post-vaccination observation.
4. Deciding how to maintain, monitor, and log the temperature of vaccine. Consider using a digital data logger.
5. Identifying what is involved in transporting vaccine - it differs for each vaccine. Understand how you can get access to and use of a "packout" container specific for vaccines.
More important detail can be found at the following website including about using cars for transport: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/toolkit/storage-handling-toolkit.pdf> Feb 5, 2021
6. Deciding what paperwork that staff bring with them and if it needs to be in different languages? It needs to be specific to the vaccine you are administering.

Updated June 10, 2021**Vaccine Administration – A Series of Actions You Need to Consider in Estimating Time in Home:**

1. Assessing patient vaccination status and screening for contraindications and precautions, use the CDC pre-vaccination checklist -even for the second dose,
 - a. Observation of at least 15 minutes up to 30 minutes for persons with a history of an immediate allergic reaction (within 4 hours) of any severity to a vaccine or injectable therapy, and persons with a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause.
 - b. CDC recommends vaccination providers have at least 3 doses of epinephrine on hand.
2. Educating patients and caregivers,
3. Preparing and administering vaccines, and
4. Documenting the person's consent to receive the vaccine and the administration in your medical record within 24 hours of administration and reporting data to the relevant system (i.e., immunization information system) no later than 72 hours after administration.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/homebound-persons.html> Feb 11, 2021

Information About COVID 19 Vaccines for Staff and for Patients:**COVID 19 – Authorized Vaccinations and Age Groups – Note Pfizer approval for 16 and older.**

Under the FDA EUAs, the following age groups are authorized to receive vaccination:

- Pfizer-BioNTech: ages ≥12 years As of May 5, 2021
 - Vaccine proved 100% effective to prevent COVID-19 in 12-15 age group clinical trial. .
 - As there is limited data, there is no determination for whether the vaccine can prevent transmission of the virus from person to person. In addition, at this time, data is not available to determine how long the vaccine will provide protection.
 - Most reported side effects in adolescent clinical trial usually lasted 1-3 days and involved the following (side effects more severe following second dose):
 - Pain at the injection site
 - Tiredness, headache
 - Chills and/or fever
 - Muscle and or joint pain
- Moderna: ages ≥18 years
- Johnson and Johnson Janssen: age > 18 y

Children and adolescents outside of these authorized age groups should not receive COVID-19 vaccination at this time.

The U.S. vaccine approval system ensures that vaccines are as safe as possible. Each vaccine must demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the risks. Find out more about how vaccine safety is ensured at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html> Feb 15 2021

CDC has developed **v-safe**, to increase the ability to rapidly detect safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe is a smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID19 vaccines. When you receive your vaccination, you find out how to register and you can report symptoms and be reminded of your next dose.

Updated June 10, 2021

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html> Dec 10, 2020

Time Between mRNA Vaccine Doses -Pfizer establishes how early 2nd Dose May Be Given

The mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series consist of two doses administered intramuscularly:

- Pfizer-BioNTech (30 µg, 0.3 ml each): 3 weeks (21 days) apart
 - The second dose no more than 4 days earlier or 17 days after the first dose
- Moderna (100 µg, 0.5 ml): 1 month (28 days) apart
 - No specific recommendation for earlier dates

CDC's updated guidance allows for second dose administration up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first if it is not feasible to adhere to the recommended interval. CDC is not advocating for delaying the second dose, but the data from clinical trials support this range if access is an issue.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html> Jan 21 2021

mRNA Vaccine Second Dose If the Brand of the 1st mRNA Dose is Not Known

If the brand/product of the first dose of vaccine cannot be determined *or is no longer available*, any available mRNA COVID-19 vaccine may be administered at a minimum interval of 28 days between doses to complete the mRNA COVID-19 vaccination series.

mRNA-COVID 19 Vaccination if the Person has had prior COVID-19 Infection.

Clinical trial data indicate that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines can safely be given to persons with evidence of a prior SARS-CoV-2 infection. This includes those with symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID infection before the any vaccination or after the first dose. CDC recommends that vaccination be offered to persons regardless of history of prior symptomatic or asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Important Medication Error Definitions and Action to Take for mRNA Vaccines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html> Feb 10, 2021

What to Expect If You Receive the mRNA Vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna): You should receive a vaccination card or printout that says which COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, and where you received it. Also, each COVID-19 vaccine has its own fact sheet with information about side effects, and when your second shot is needed. You should receive this on paper or electronically when you receive your first shot.

Updated June 10, 2021

mRNA Vaccine Common Side Effects: Side effects are normal signs that your body is building protection and responding to the vaccine. These side effects should go away in a few days. Note that side effects most often occur the first day after the second mRNA dose. “Reactogenicity Following Receipt of mRNA-Based COVID-19 Vaccines” Johanna Chapin-Bardales, PhD, MPH1; Julianne Gee, MPH1; Tanya Myers, PhD, MSc1 JAMA April 5, 2021 doi:10.1001/jama.2021.5374

Any Systemic Reactions	Pfizer BioNTech (64%)	Moderna (75%)
Fatigue	48%	60%
Headache	40%	53%
Myalgia	37%	51%
Chills	23%	40%
Fever	21%	37%
Joint Pain	20%	31%
Nausea	13%	20%
Vomiting	1%	2%
Diarrhea	6%	8%
Abdominal Pain	5%	7%
Rash Other than Injection Site	1%	2%

- **Important: Masking and Social Distancing Continues even after Vaccination** until more of the population is vaccinated. No current vaccine is 100% effective.

Allergic Reactions to Vaccine

Severe Allergic Reaction - Anaphylaxis -after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

- A severe allergic reaction results in an individual's needs to be treated with epinephrine or an EpiPen® or hospitalization.
- If an individual reports a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine,
 - they should not receive either of the currently available mRNA COVID-19 vaccines -do not try the other brand if a reaction has occurred to a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
 - CDC recommends that the individual should not get the second dose.

Immediate Allergic Reaction: to a COVID-19 vaccine

- Important definition: *immediate allergic reaction*: Within 4 hours of being vaccinated such as hives, swelling, and wheezing (respiratory distress).

Updated June 10, 2021

- Anyone who has an immediate allergic reaction—even if it was not severe—to any ingredient in an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, **the CDC recommends that they should not get either of the currently available mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.**
- **An individual who had an immediate allergic reaction after the first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, should not get the second dose.** Their doctor may refer them to a specialist in allergies and immunology to provide more care or advice.

COVID 19 and Allergic Reactions to Other Types of Vaccines

If an individual has had an immediate allergic reaction—even if it was not severe—to *a vaccine or injectable therapy* for another disease, they should ask their doctor before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID 19 Vaccine and Allergies Not Related to Vaccines

- CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions *not* related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated.
- People with a history of allergies to oral medications or a family history of severe allergic reactions can also get vaccinated.

COVID 19 and previous allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate

Polysorbate is not an ingredient in either mRNA COVID-19 vaccine but is closely related to PEG, which is in the vaccines. **People who are allergic to PEG or polysorbate should not get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/allergic-reaction.html> Jan 22, 2021

mRNA Vaccines: Pfizer and Moderna

Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines use new technology: both are mRNA vaccines:

- Most vaccines use weakened or inactive parts of a virus to stimulate the body's immune response to create antibodies and kill the virus.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do not contain a live virus, and do not have the risk of causing the disease. These vaccines use what is called mRNA that triggers the process in our cells to build immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19. This approach has been studied for over a decade.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/mrna-vaccine-basics.html> November 24, 2020

Simple Presentation of How mRNA Vaccines Work:

- mRNA vaccines cannot give someone COVID-19 and do not use live virus.
- mRNA vaccines do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way.
 - mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept.
 - The cell breaks down and gets rid of the mRNA soon after it is finished using the instructions.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mRNA.html?ACSTrackingID=USCDC_2067-DM47392&ACSTrackingLabel=Understanding%20mRNA%20COVID-19%20Vaccines%20%7C%20COVID-19&deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM47392 Dec 18, 2020

Updated June 10, 2021**Johnson & Johnson Janssen COVID 19 vaccine is a viral vector vaccine:**

- Viral vector vaccines use a modified version of a different virus (the vector) to deliver instructions to our cells. For COVID-19 viral vector vaccines, the vector (**not** the virus that causes COVID-19, but a different, harmless virus) enters a cell in the body and then use the cell's machinery to produce **a harmless** piece of the virus that causes COVID-19 called a spike protein that is only found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The cell displays the spike protein on its surface, and our immune system recognizes it does not belong there. This triggers our immune system to begin producing antibodies and activating other immune cells to fight off what it thinks is an infection. As a result, our bodies protect us against future infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Viral vectors cannot cause infection with COVID-19 or with the virus used as the vaccine vector.
- The genetic material delivered by the viral vector vaccine does not integrate into or affect a person's DNA.
- The J&J vaccine is 85% effective in preventing severe disease across all regions in the clinical trials and showed protection against COVID-19 related hospitalization and death, beginning 28 days after vaccination.
- Side effects of vaccination from the clinical trials: injection site pain, headache, fatigue, myalgia, nausea, fever, injection site erythema and injection site swelling. Severe allergic reactions have occurred in clinical trials.
<https://www.janssenlabels.com/emergency-use-authorization/Janssen+COVID-19+Vaccine-HCP-fact-sheet.pdf> (Fact sheet for healthcare providers administering Janssen COVID 19 Vaccine)

April 28 Resume J&J Vaccinations:

Women younger than 50 years old should be made aware of a rare risk of blood clots with low platelets following vaccination and the availability of other COVID-19 vaccines where this risk has not been observed. CDC confirms a total of 15 cases of TTS have been reported to VAERS among 6.8M J&J vaccinations, including the original six reported. All cases occurred in women between the ages of 18 and 59, with a median age of 37 years. Reports indicated symptom onset between 6 and 15 days after vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html> April 23, 2021

What Symptoms to watch if You Receive a J&J Vaccination seek medical care right away if you develop any of the following symptoms of a blood clot with low platelets:

- severe headache (most common)
- backache,
- **Blurred vision**
- **Fainting**
- **Seizures**
- **Severe pain in our chest**
- **severe abdominal or stomach pain,**
- shortness of breath,
- leg swelling,

Updated June 10, 2021

- tiny red spots on the skin (petechiae), or
- new or easy bruising

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/JJUpdate.html> April 20

Updated J&J product information: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/janssen/index.html>

Co-Vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccine series should routinely be administered alone, with a minimum interval of 14 days before or after administration with any other vaccine. If benefits of co-administration outweigh the Potential unknown risks of vaccine coadministration (e.g., tetanus), the interval could be shorter period.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

TB testing and mRNA COVID-19 vaccination:

Not enough is yet known about the potential impact of mRNA vaccines on immune responses to know if the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine has a potential effect on TST or IGRA test results during the first 4 weeks after COVID-19 vaccination.

For healthcare personnel or patients who require baseline TB testing (at onboarding or entry to facilities)

at the same time they are to receive a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, CDC recommends:

- Perform TB symptom screening on all healthcare personnel or patients.
- If using IGRA, draw blood prior to COVID-19 mRNA vaccination.
- If using TST, place prior to COVID-19 mRNA vaccination.
- If COVID-19 mRNA vaccination has already occurred, defer TST or IGRA until 4 weeks after completion of 2-dose COVID-19 mRNA vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/letters/covid19-mrna.html#:~:text=For%20healthcare%20personnel%20or%20patients,to%20COVID%2D19%20mRNA%20vaccination>

W

Waivers:

Types of 1135 waivers are issued during the Public Health Emergency (PHE). All waivers are effective March 1, 2020 and end effective when the federal Public Health Emergency ends.

- **Federal Blanket Waivers:** Publicly announced by CMS and applicable to all providers by Medicare benefit type. Examples include the home health and hospice waivers.
- **State Medicaid waivers:** States may request waivers of Medicaid regulations by contacting CMS. Over 48 states have requested waivers. To the following website, find your state, click on what is

Updated June 10, 2021

a letter to the state, scroll past the letter and you will find the details of the waiver.
<https://www.medicaid.gov/state-resource-center/disaster-response-toolkit/federal-disasterresources/entry>

Please continue to join CHAP on our Weekly COVID 19 Conference Calls in 2021:

- **Thursdays 3 -4:00 PM ESDT Call in: 646-307-1479, or toll-free 877-304-9269 • Participant code: 246854#**

Thank you for your dedication and be well!