

How UW Medicine is keeping you and your family safe in the era of COVID-19

At UW Medicine, we have seen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our patients and community. COVID-19 has changed the way we live. Despite these changes, UW Medicine's commitment to improve the health of the public is unwavering. We are proud to serve as a national leader in our response to and recovery from COVID-19.

We know that many of you have been affected by our need to plan for a COVID-19 surge by decreasing the number of patients we normally see every day to ensure a safe environment for patients and caregivers. Some of you even delayed elective surgeries and other care as we worked on our COVID-19 response. We sincerely appreciate your flexibility and understanding while we fought to reduce the impact of this global pandemic on our community.

Together, our efforts have paid off. Since late April, our community has "flattened the curve" of the local epidemic and has seen significantly fewer new cases. With this in mind, we want to assure you that we believe you are safe to return to our clinics and hospitals. Additionally, we want to share with you the heightened precautions we have put in place to prevent exposure to respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and create the safest possible environment for you and your family.



Hand Hygiene



Physical Distancing

- Telehealth (video or phone) visits available if appropriate for the type of condition(s) you'd like to address
- Separate from other people by 6 feet whenever possible
- Signage for safe distancing at all clinics/hospitals
- Symptom screening at the door and limited visitation



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Required masking for all staff, patients, visitors and vendors in clinical areas
- Patients and visitors may wear their cloth masks/facial coverings when coming in for care
- Adequate PPE supply to safely care for every patient



Laboratory Testing

- Expanded testing capabilities: nasal swab for current infections; antibody (serology) for prior infections
- Universal testing of all hospital admissions and patients undergoing certain procedures
- Robust program for testing any staff member with any symptoms that could be due to COVID-19



Research, Education and Communication

- UW Medicine's nationally recognized team of specialists is leading cutting-edge research and constantly reviewing new information
- The specialists create policies and practices that are utilized by our teams so that our patients receive care based on the best scientific evidence available.



Environmental Cleaning

COVID-19 Information Sheet

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 stands for “coronavirus disease 2019.” In COVID-19, “CO” stands for “corona,” “VI” for “virus,” and “D” for disease. COVID-19 is caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus first appeared in late 2019 and quickly spread around the world.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms usually start five days after a person is infected, but it may take between two to 14 days. Some people may never develop symptoms at all. For those who do, symptoms may include any of the following: cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, gastrointestinal symptoms (such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), headache and runny nose. For most people, symptoms will get better within a few weeks. In some others, COVID-19 can lead to serious health problems like pneumonia, low oxygen levels, heart problems or even death. This is more common in people who are 65 years or older or have other health problems like heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, cancer or obesity.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 mainly spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks near other people. The virus can be passed easily between people who live together. But it can also spread at gatherings where people are talking close together, shaking hands, sharing food or even singing. It is also possible to get sick if you touch a surface that an ill person has touched or coughed on and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes. A person can be infected and spread the virus to others, even without having any symptoms. This is why physical distancing is so important (see below). Additionally, the virus is not thought to be spread through food.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider. Whenever possible, it is best to call ahead of time. The staff can tell you what to do, whether you need to be seen in person, and how to get tested. Many people with only mild symptoms should stay home and avoid other people until they get better.

Is there a test for the virus that causes COVID-19?

Yes. If your healthcare provider suspects you have COVID-19, they will order a test for you. At UW Medicine, we have several testing locations where we offer two main types of tests: nasal swab (to test for active infections) and an antibody blood test (or serology) to see if you may have been infected in the past.

How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no known specific treatment for mild COVID-19. Most people will be able to stay home while they get better. But people with serious symptoms might need to go to the hospital. UW Medicine is participating in several regional and national research trials to help expand our treatment options.

Can COVID-19 be prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, but there are steps you can take to help slow the spread:

- Practice physical distancing: Avoid contact with people who are sick and unless needed, keep your distance from people who do not live in your household. Avoid gatherings. When you do need to go out, try your best to stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- Wear a face covering when you need to go out. You can use a cloth or homemade mask to cover your mouth and nose. When you take your face covering off, make sure you do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth; wash your hands afterward. You can wash the cloth mask with the rest of your laundry.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. This is especially important after being out in public after touching surfaces someone else may have touched, or after touching your own mouth, nose and eyes.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose and eyes.

References and Resources:

UW Medicine Coronavirus Website: <https://www.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/COVID19

World Health Organization (WHO): www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

UpToDate: [Patient education: Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) overview \(The Basics\)](#)