



## COVID-19 Update

**Thursday, March 19, 2020**

*"Our health system has been working around the clock to ensure that New Yorkers receive the most comprehensive, expedited care possible, and that our frontline staff and clinicians are kept safe during this public health crisis. Our expertise in responding to many public health crises with collective calm, focus on safety, and reliance on science and best practices will help our public health system weather this storm."*

-- **Machelle Allen, MD., NYC Health + Hospitals Chief Medical Officer**

In today's COVID-19 Update, you can get the latest requirements for **when health care workers can return to work after Covid-19 exposure**, the new and **more restrictive hospital visitor policy**, how to **request child care resources** available through the City of New York, and what our health system is doing to **expand testing capacity**, including our **new drive-through assessment and testing centers**.

### **New Policy for Health Care Workers After COVID-19 Exposure**

The New York State Department of Health and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have established new clinical guidance on when healthcare workers, including everyone working in an NYC Health + Hospitals facility, can return to work after being exposed to COVID-19. The new guidance is based on symptoms instead of the type of exposure experienced by the health care worker. NYC Health + Hospitals is adopting this new guidance as an Occupational Health Services (OHS) policy for the health system effective March 18, 2020. Some highlights below. View the policy [here](#).

- The period of required isolation is now AT LEAST seven (7) days for workers who have symptoms, and can be extended depending on symptoms.
- Workers who do not have symptoms, regardless of their role in caring for patients who have tested positive for COVID-19, can continue working.
- All health care workers will self-monitor regularly for fever or other symptoms, and temperatures will be taken at the start of each shift.
- OHS will provide guidance to employees on a case by case basis.

### **Child Care Resources for Health Care Workers - Registration Now Open**

The City of New York is providing childcare for healthcare workers and first responders who are critical to the COVID-19 response efforts. NYC Health + Hospital staff who have no other means of childcare can register for the New York City Department of Education's Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs). RECs will open on Monday, March 23rd and operate from 7:30am to 6:00pm (Monday-Friday), and will ensure that students have access to remote learning as well as various art, music, and other activities. If your child is a New York City resident and you would like to enroll in one of these centers, please complete this [REC Enrollment Form](#) for each child you are seeking to enroll. The Department of Education is managing this program directly. You will then receive an email from them confirming your child's center assignment.

### **New NO Visitor Policy**

The New York State Department of Health issued new visitation policies for hospital visitors and caregivers. Effective today, all patient visitation at NYC Health + Hospitals **IS SUSPENDED** except:

- When medically necessary and visitor is essential to the patient's care;

- The visitor is a family member or legal representative of a patient in an imminent end-of-life situation; or
- For a visitor of a woman in labor, an infant in the neonatal ICU, or a pediatric patient.

Any visitor meeting any of the above exceptions, must be screened for symptoms of cough, shortness of breath, or fever, or potential exposure to someone with COVID-19 prior to entering the hospital. Visitors who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, or who have potentially had exposure to someone with COVID-19 will not be permitted to visit patients. The length of the visits and number of visitors will be limited.

### **Expanding Capacity for 5,000 Daily Tests**

On Tuesday, Mayor de Blasio announced a private-public partnership between NYC Health + Hospitals and BioReference that would increase testing capacity to 5,000 per day, with a one-to-two day turnaround for results. All COVID-19 testing is being provided at no cost. Testing will be prioritized for those with serious illness at hospitals and health care facilities across NYC Health + Hospitals, frontline health care personnel and first responders. Those with mild illness are being directed to stay home, practice social distancing, and consult their health care provider if their symptoms do not subside in 3-4 days. Read the Mayor's announcement [here](#).

### **Drive-Through Testing Now Available**

NYC Health + Hospitals this week opened the system's first drive-through testing location at NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi in the Bronx for patients with appointments who can drive up and get swabbed. We will have three more drive-through sites opening at NYC Health + Hospitals/Coney Island and Kings County in Brooklyn, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens. The drive-through sites are among 18 COVID-19 Assessment and Testing Centers at hospitals and Gotham Health centers that will be serving New Yorkers in designated mobile medical tents to expand by-appointment-only COVID-19 testing capacity as we continue to strengthen our preparedness efforts and respond to the pandemic. At full-capacity, each hospital-based testing center will be able to accommodate up to 150 tests per day drive-through services will accommodate up to 100 tests per day, and testing centers in Gotham Health sites will accommodate 50- 75 tests per day. [Read the Mayor's announcement here](#).

If you have questions, write to us at [COVID-19Readiness@nychhc.org](mailto:COVID-19Readiness@nychhc.org) – our Special Pathogens and Emergency Response colleagues will be available to help.

Other resources:

[Video Message from Mitch](#) - From March 13, 2020

[NYC Health + Hospitals COVID-19 Guidance & Resources](#)

[NYC Department of Health](#)

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

[Stay Home To Stop the Spread of Coronavirus](#)