



COVID-19 Update

Sunday, March 22, 2020

In today's COVID-19 Update, we feature **information to help our patients and families** cope during these difficult times. Here you will find talking points to explain the **new testing policy**; how to direct New Yorkers to **find help with food, money, housing**; **new restrictions for public gatherings**; how to **protect vulnerable New Yorkers** over the age of 70; and how to **stay connected** with the latest information.

Understanding New Rules for COVID-19 Testing

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has directed health care facilities to immediately stop testing non-hospitalized patients for COVID-19 unless test results will impact the clinical management of the patient. In addition, the department also advised providers and hospitals **to not test** asymptomatic people. This will help direct medical attention to New Yorkers who need it most and will also help preserve PPE for healthcare workers providing medically necessary care for hospitalized patients. Effective immediately, NYC Health + Hospitals will adopt this new guidance. We will:

- Continue to have clinicians in our call center talk to thousands of New Yorkers every day to have them stay at home if they don't need to come to the ED;
- No longer do testing by appointment and instead use testing centers/tents as a place for patients to go as ED diversion;
- Reserve testing for patients needing hospitalization, or as part of an ED decompression strategy as clinically appropriate.

Here's the message you can pass on to patients, family and neighbors:

- In line with New York City Department of Health recommendations, NYC Health + Hospitals is no longer testing patients for COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization.
- If you are sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat, you must stay inside and isolate yourself from others.
- Isolate yourself for at least 7 days from when your symptoms started. You must also be without fever during the last 3 days of your isolation.
- Please only go to the emergency room if you are severely ill.
- We are asking every New Yorker, regardless of symptoms, to stay inside your home.
- Staying home can save the life of another New Yorker.
- Together we can slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness.

Helping New Yorkers Find Food, Money, Housing Assistance

ACCESS NYC aims to connect New Yorkers with the resources they need in the City. As news about COVID-19 rapidly changes, the resources available can help guide New Yorkers with up-to-date and accurate information and support to access food, money, housing, and jobs. There are over 30 programs New Yorkers may be eligible for regardless of immigration status and even if you're already receiving benefits or have a job. New Yorkers can also apply directly for SNAP, Cash Assistance and Medicaid renewal.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable New Yorkers

The City of New York issued other guidance for non-essential gatherings and directed any concentration of people outside their home to be limited to workers providing essential services. All NYC Health + Hospitals employees and affiliate staff are considered essential workers. The public is being urged to practice social distancing, limit outdoor activity and use of public transportation, and asking people who are sick to not leave home except to receive medical care. In addition, the City called for the enforcement of "Matilda's Law," which sets restrictions for vulnerable New Yorkers who are over the age of 70 and/or immune-compromised. [View the new guidance here.](#)

Staying Informed

Nearly 700,000 New Yorkers have signed up for the City's COVID text notification system. To get regular updates on the latest developments with coronavirus in New York City text **COVID to 692-692**. New Yorkers can text COVIDESP to 692-692 for updates in Spanish. You will receive regular SMS texts with the latest news and developments. If New Yorkers have any questions on finding medical care, they can call 311.

If you have questions, write to us at 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](#)

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