

Coronavirus/COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

How is UMass Memorial Health Care preparing for coronavirus?

By having the following systems in place, we can quickly respond should we have a local outbreak.

- We've put our Incident Command System into action, with leadership meeting daily to develop plans and review updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and others.
- A 70+ person Coronavirus Task Force, including clinical and nonclinical experts spanning our entire health system, are coming together to develop plans.
- Each of our hospitals are implementing plans to keep staff, patients and the community safe.
- A special section on our website – www.umassmemorial.org/coronavirus has been created for our caregivers and community.
- We're in regular contact with state, federal, and local agencies, all of whom are responding to the situation. We're in regular contact with DPH and watching CDC updates.
- Also, one of our infectious disease physicians has been part of a small group working to update the governor.

I'm worried about coming to the hospital. What do I need to know?

We take our patients' health very seriously, and we've implemented procedures to ensure the safety of our patients and caregivers. The hospital is a safe place.

What about visitor hours?

We have added restrictions to our visitor hours (Details can be found at www.umassmemorial.org/coronavirus.) We realize the importance visitors have in each patient's healing process. We are not allowing visitors at the hospital for the time being, therefore, we are using alternative methods (e.g., iPads) to help patients feel connected to their loved ones. In some cases, exceptions will be made.

What do I do if I have a physical coming up?

Nonurgent appointments, such as annual physicals, are being cancelled, so please call your physician's office before going to your appointment.

What do I do if I have an elective procedure coming up?

The Department of Public Health issued an order mandating that hospitals cancel nonessential elective procedures. Call the office where your procedure is taking place to discuss your care.

What if I have an upcoming appointment?

Call first if you have an upcoming appointment and are experiencing a fever, NEW cough (within the last seven days) or NEW and mild shortness of breath. Call the office where your appointment is scheduled for guidance. We request that you don't come in for your upcoming appointment without calling first. We request that you don't come to emergency departments, urgent care sites or offices to have those particular symptoms evaluated as you may pass on your illness to others.

What do I do if I have a fever, new cough or new and mild shortness of breath?

If you're experiencing a fever, NEW cough (within the last seven days) or NEW and mild shortness of breath, call your primary care physician's office for guidance. We request that you don't come to

emergency departments, urgent care sites or offices to have those particular symptoms evaluated as you may pass on your illness to others.

What does having a “new” cough mean?

A new cough means these symptoms started less than seven days ago.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

Anyone experiencing fever, cough, or sore throat should stay home from work or school for at least seven days. You shouldn't return until one to two days after the symptoms end. Wash your hands frequently. And as always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. You may want to call your primary care physician, especially if you feel your symptoms are severe. If you have difficulty breathing, etc., seek treatment immediately, but call ahead.

What should I do if someone I live with is sick with flu-like symptoms?

Separate yourself from other people and animals. If the symptoms are severe, the person should call to see a medical provider. If the affected person has had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of the coronavirus, your provider can offer further steps to take.

What if I have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19?

We recommend following [CDC guidelines](#):

Household members, intimate partners, and caregivers outside a health care setting may have close contact with a person with symptomatic, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or a person under investigation. Close contacts should monitor their health; they should call their health care provider right away if they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.

What does social distancing mean?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Put distance between yourself and other people. This is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](#).

What do I do if I've been told to self-monitor?

Self-monitoring means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or mild difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop a fever, cough, or have mild difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate (see below), limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a health care provider.

What does self-isolate or self-quarantine mean?

Self-isolation or self-quarantine is done to lessen the spread of germs. The ill person should eat/be fed in their room if possible. Nondisposable food service items used should be handled with gloves and washed with hot water or in a dishwasher. If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the ill person. Use gloves when removing garbage bags, handling and disposing of trash. Follow proper hand hygiene.

What is the latest news about cruise ships?

The CDC has issued a warning as cruise ships are considered [level 3](#), similar to other high-risk countries. The CDC recommends that travelers defer all cruise travel worldwide. Cruise travelers should stay home for 14 days after returning from travel, monitor their health, and practice social distancing.

Is there a vaccine for the coronavirus?

At this time, there's no vaccine for coronavirus – all the more reason to keep washing your hands!

How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

Use the same steps as you would to protect yourself from seasonal flu and other infections:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or alcohol-based foam/cleaners), especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Practice social distancing. One of our providers likes the term physical distancing because as much as we need to physically keep distance from each other (6 feet), socially we need to be more in-tuned to the needs and fears of others and take care of each other.
- Cough into your arm or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue away. Remind others to do this, too.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Remember, the elderly and others with health issues are the most vulnerable.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What can I do to stop spreading germs?

Stop germs! Wash your hands. Keeping your hands clean is one of the most important things you can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.

The CDC provides excellent information on [cleaning and disinfecting your home](#).

Is there a correct way to wash my hands?

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails and jewelry.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end, twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air-dry them.

Why is this being treated different than the flu? Is it spreading faster?

We don't yet have complete information on COVID-19, however, the rate of transmission based on information at this point suggests that it's more transmissible than the flu. There are ongoing studies to further determine this.

With so much information about COVID-19, what are some reliable, factual sources?

UMass Memorial is using the below websites as resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [Coronavirus Homepage](#)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health - [Coronavirus Homepage](#)

Like the flu, will COVID-19 have less of an impact with the warmer weather?

Per the CDC:

It isn't yet known if weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months, but that doesn't mean it's impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time, it's not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There's much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19. Investigations are ongoing.