

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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By now I'm sure that everyone has seen the news about the Coronavirus. HealthTechS3 has put together some information that we hope will be helpful in your preparations, including a checklist from the CDC. Rural or Critical Access Hospitals may have fewer resources to draw on than urban facilities – but are certainly known for their resilience and ability to handle a wide range of emergency situations.

Background of Coronavirus

The Coronavirus is a kind of common virus that causes an infection in your nose, sinuses, or upper airway and throat. Most coronaviruses aren't dangerous.

Earlier this year in 2020, after an outbreak in December 2019 in China, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified a new type, 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), which can be fatal. The organization has named the disease that results - COVID-19.

The outbreak has quickly moved from China to other parts of the world. It spreads much the same way as other coronaviruses do through person-to-person contact. Symptoms can show up anywhere from 2 to 14 days after exposure. Early on, they're a lot like the common cold.

Being Prepared

All U.S. hospitals should be prepared for the **possible** arrival of patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). All hospitals should ensure their staff are educated, trained, equipped and capable of the necessary practices needed to:

- Prevent the spread of respiratory diseases including COVID-19 within the facility. Promptly identify and isolate patients with possible COVID-19 and inform the correct facility staff and local and state public health authorities.
- Potentially care for a limited number of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID – 19, but plan for a larger number of patients in the context of an escalating outbreak.

- Monitor and manage any healthcare personnel that might be exposed to COVID-19.
- Communicate effectively within the facility and plan for appropriate external communication related to COVID-19

Recommendations for Rural Hospitals

HealthTechS3 recommends, that in addition to reviewing the CDC checklist, hospitals consider some or all the following strategies:

- **Infection Control Committee:** Use the Infection Control Committee and the Infection Control Practitioner. They are your champions.
- **Stay Informed:** Stay up to date with information from State Agencies and the CDC.
- **Communicate, Communicate, and Communicate:** Keep your leaders, providers, staff up to date on recommendations from the State or CDC. Keep lines of communication open with staff and providers. Post latest info from CDC and the State. Provide education to staff and providers in all including non-hospital providers.
- **Develop a Plan:** Develop a plan for how your organization will identify and treat patients with suspected Coronavirus. Include community providers such as ambulance, emergency responders, home health and nursing homes. Run “what if” scenarios and look for solutions
 - *What if we don't have enough ventilators?*
 - *What if we don't have enough isolation rooms / beds?*
 - *What if we have supply chain disruptions?*
 - *What if we don't have enough staff or providers?*
 - *What if the ER is overwhelmed with the “worried well”?*
 - *What if we don't have enough staff?*
 - *What if*
- **Test your Plan:** Consider using a “secret” shopper to see if staff in the ER or Clinic identify a potential contagious patient and follow the correct procedure.
- **Screening Protocols:** Develop protocols for identifying patients. Don't forget provider offices.
- **N95 Masks:** Make sure you have enough N95 masks for ALL staff including admitting areas. One hospital we spoke to indicated that they didn't have enough N95 masks for all staff in the Hospital but are working with the state to reach out to other hospitals that may have extras. They have also decided to use their supply of PAPRs if needed.

- **Negative Pressure Rooms:** If you have negative pressure rooms but they are not operational – consider getting all of them ready to accept patients.
- **Friends and Family:** Prepare informational information for friends and families in case you do have a patient with the suspected Coronavirus.
- **Human Resources:** Develop policies for staff who may have traveled outside of the country to China. A CDC Health ALERT has been issued – **See Link for complete information:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-china.html>

Other Resourceful Information:

- **What You Need to Know** ([See Attached Guideline from CDC](#))
- **What to do if you get sick** ([See Attached Guideline from CDC](#))
- **Hospitals – Being Prepared** – [The CDC Checklist](#)

The following checklist does not describe mandatory requirements or standards; rather, it highlights important areas for [hospitals to review in preparation for potential arrivals of COVID-19 patients](#).
(See Attached CDC Checklist)

Links for Updated Coronavirus Information:

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/resources.html>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>