



March 12, 2020

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

How are we handling patients with COVID-19?

HCA MidAmerica Division has had patients test positive for COVID-19 at Tulane Medical Center. We are taking precautionary measures to keep our colleagues and patients safe.

We are working very closely with the local and state departments of health, as well as the CDC, to assure that we continue to take all appropriate precautions.

Is it safe for me to work at a facility with a patient who has COVID-19?

Yes. No evidence exists of the virus spreading in setting where proper precautions are used: patient isolation, use of N95 masks (where appropriate) and activation of personal protection equipment (PPE). Evidence also indicates that the transmission route is respiratory, and we know how to contain respiratory viruses with the aforementioned precautions.

How should healthcare personnel protect themselves when evaluating a patient who may have COVID-19?

CDC currently recommends a cautious approach to persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19. Healthcare personnel evaluating PUI or providing care for patients with confirmed COVID-19 should use Standard Precautions, Contact Precautions, Airborne Precautions and eye protection, such as goggles or a face shield. See the [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Known or Patients Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Healthcare Settings](#).

Why have some Tulane Medical Center colleagues been asked to remain under home quarantine?

Your safety and the safety of our patients is our top priority. Tulane Medical Center is evaluating colleague risk exposure using the CDC risk stratification guidelines. Some of those colleagues may need to be furloughed based on their risk per the state health department and CDC guidelines for healthcare workers. Those who are furloughed will be placed under a 14-day home quarantine and not scheduled to work. Since the COVID-19 infection can be contagious, even with mild symptoms or before symptoms

begin, it is safest for those colleagues identified to remain outside the workplace to protect patients and other colleagues.

Why does the furlough last 14 days?

The time of the furlough is based on the “incubation period,” the time between exposure and symptoms. For COVID-19, the incubation period can be as long as 14 days and, as a result, identified colleagues cannot be at work until that period ends and we know that they do not present an infection risk to patients or other colleagues.

Being furloughed only means that you are staying away from the workplace because it is *possible* you could develop symptoms. It is believed that most people who get COVID-19 have a mild, flu-like illness. The department of health will be monitoring our colleagues while on furlough to see if they develop any symptoms.

What will staffing support include during this timeframe?

Colleagues scheduled to work who do not have symptoms are expected to work their assigned shift and provide safe, appropriate care. In addition, there may be a need for additional staffing support over the next few weeks that you may be asked to cover.

What information can I share if a patient or visitor asks me about the patient?

Just as we must protect the privacy of all patients, please continue to follow HIPAA regulations. However, you can share that Tulane Medical Center currently has one patient who has tested positive for COVID-19.

How are you ensuring that surface areas in contact with a positive patient have been disinfected?

COVID-19 virus can easily be killed with standard disinfecting procedures. We are ensuring that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures from the CDC are followed consistently and correctly. This includes:

- Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures, including for those patient care areas in which aerosol-generating procedures are performed.
- For any isolation patient, machines are to be cleaned in the room and then taken out and cleaned again. Personnel cleaning the machine must wear gloves.

Now that a patient has tested positive for COVID-19, what happens next?

We will continue to monitor the patient closely with direction from the CDC. The patient will remain in isolation and we are utilizing PPE procedures.

Will there be routine testing for staff now?

No. Staff coming into contact with the patient are wearing PPE. We have followed every directive from the CDC. We have also utilized a two-person system to ensure proper PPE procedures have been followed when applying and removing protective gear.

Do we have enough PPE?

HCA Healthcare’s HealthTrust team is working to ensure we have the necessary supply of appropriate PPE.

What precautions should I take at work?

All of our caregivers need to hold each other accountable for performing good hand hygiene and using PPE appropriately and properly. Look out for your colleagues and ask any ill caregiver to seek medical attention when needed.

What happens if I get a fever?

We are following standard procedures for any colleague who is not feeling well. If you have a fever, please advise your supervisor, stay at home and seek medical care from your primary care physician.

If I'm worried about coming to work, can I call in?

Colleagues scheduled to work who **do not** have symptoms are expected to work their assigned shift and provide safe, appropriate care.

If you are unable to work, please follow standard procedures for all call-ins.

Can I wear a mask regardless of my position?

In order to ensure we continue to have the PPE supplies we need, we ask that only employees performing the screening at entry points and treating patients wear the appropriate mask for their role.

Where can I get more information about COVID-19?

Check out <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>