

## **South Peninsula Hospital & COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions 5/11/2020**

### **Is the hospital offering COVID-19 testing?**

Yes, if you are experiencing symptoms such as cough, runny nose, headache, sore throat, body aches, diarrhea, rash, loss of appetite or loss of sense of smell or taste. Testing is now based solely on your symptoms, If you do not have one, contact the Emergency Room Triage at (907) 235-0235 or go to the hospital main entrance parking lot, remain in your vehicle and call for curbside testing. There is no charge to the individual for testing.

### **Does the hospital offer antibody testing?**

South Peninsula Hospital offers COVID-19 antibody testing, which is a blood test that is processed out of state by Mayo Clinic. The test requires a provider referral, there is no charge to an insured individual and the self-pay cost is \$78.

### **Is the hospital prepared to care for the community?**

As prepared as they possibly can be, given the situation at hand. National shortages of supplies and equipment make the preparation a little challenging, but accommodations are in place to address those shortages. Cleaning & reusing supplies, using homemade masks, and reassigning spaces to accommodate need are just a few actions being taken.

### **Where will all the patients go?**

At the moment, a COVID-19 patient would be cared for in our regular inpatient unit. If the need warrants it:

- Mild patients with few symptoms, which are manageable at home, will recover at home.
- Moderate needs patients who need hospitalization but without a high level of care will be placed at an Alternate Care Site which will be at the Community Christian Church, but only after the hospital nears capacity.
- Urgent needs patients will be cared for in the hospital's acute care unit.
- Severe needs patients will be cared for in our ICU, or sent to identified COVID-19 hospitals in Anchorage.

### **Will there be enough space and beds?**

Spaces, equipment and staff within the hospital will be rearranged to accommodate the plan for care if needed.

- Patients hospitalized for reasons different than COVID-19 might be cared for in alternate locations in the hospital, including but not limited to the Surgery Department and the Physical Therapy Department, as needed. These two areas alone provide enough space for at least 40 patients. Other outpatient services have been moved out of the building, freeing up additional spaces if needed, better improving patient and staff safety.
- Patients hospitalized for COVID-19 will be cared for in what is normally the inpatient acute care area. The hospital has 18 beds normally in that area, but by doubling up where possible, and utilizing other spaces as needed, will have as many as 30 patients in the unit.
- The Alternate care site is currently prepared for 40 and can expand further with additional supplies and equipment.

### **How many ventilators and negative pressure rooms does the hospital have?**

SPH has access to nine ventilators total, three of which are normally used in the inpatient area, three from the surgery department, two from local EMS and one for transport. We have six negative pressure rooms.

### **Are there any positive cases in Homer?**

To date, SPH has tested four confirmed positive individuals. Case counts are updated at [coronavirus.alaska.gov](https://coronavirus.alaska.gov) and you can find **daily updates of numbers of tests** at [sphosp.org](http://sphosp.org).

### **Why is there often a helicopter on the roof of the hospital?**

Guardian flight services is now stationing medivac helicopters on the peninsula, one of which will sometimes park on the helipad at the hospital. This arrangement was announced in January and was not related to the COVID-19 pandemic, though will certainly benefit anyone needing emergency medical air transfer regardless of the reason.

## **What if I need medical care for something unrelated to COVID-19?**

Most routine services are now offered, including surgeries, elective procedures, and all types of outpatient and clinic visits. From wellness exams and vaccinations to screening mammograms and colonoscopies, we are now scheduling appointments for most routine care. Expect universal masking, being screened at the entrance and new precautions.

Homer Medical Center maintains regular clinic hours Monday-Saturday, including the evening walk-in clinics on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5-8 pm. If you have any one of the following: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, chills, diminished sense of taste or smell, diarrhea, fatigue, fever (measured or subjective), headache, rash, muscle/joint aches, nausea, runny nose, sore throat, or sputum production, please call before you come in 235-8586. Medical emergencies should still use the hospital's emergency department, where you will be kept isolated from those being seen for COVID-19.

All SPH clinics and specialty care providers now offer telehealth and/or in person visits. This means you might be able to visit with your provider on your smart phone, computer or tablet. Call your provider today to arrange.

Homer Medical Center: (907) 235-8586

SPH Rehabilitation Department: (907) 235-0370

Ortho & Specialty Clinics: (907) 235-0310

Sleep & Neurology: (907) 235-7200

Functional Medicine Clinic: (907) 435-3070

Peninsula Surgical: (907) 235-3225

Oncology & Cardiology: (907) 235-0201

**IMPORTANT:** If you have new onset of symptoms of COVID-19, or believe you have been exposed, do not come in to any clinics, even if you have a scheduled appointment. Call the E.R. Triage Line at (907) 235-0235 to discuss your symptoms or exposure and see if you need to be tested.

## **I'm pregnant. Will my baby and I be safe?**

The West Wing and Birthing Center are taking all the necessary precautions to protect you. The West Wing is calling all clients ahead of their appointments to conduct phone screening for COVID-19 exposure and travel history, having patients wait in their cars until their appointment (instead of the waiting area inside the clinic), spacing appointments farther apart to allow for additional cleaning and distancing, and staff are using PPE per recommended guidelines. The Birthing Center at SPH is now isolated from the rest of the hospital. Birthing Center staff are assigned only to the birthing center, all clothing is being changed upon entry, and non-essential staff and visitors are not permitted. Contact the West Wing at (907) 435-3040 or the Birthing Center at (907) 235-0240 for more information.

## **I don't feel sick; do I still need to wear a face covering in public?**

Even people who have no symptoms whatsoever may be infected with the virus and capable of transmitting the virus to others when interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing. Wearing cloth face coverings may help to minimize transmission while around others outside of your household. Due to a nationwide shortage of medical supplies, including facemasks, the state suggests Alaskans make their own face coverings to wear in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies). This recommendation aligns with current national guidance: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-facecover.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-facecover.html). Masks are not recommended for children under two years of age.

## **Does the hospital need masks or other supplies?**

Yes, and we are very appreciative of the generosity of the community. However, other agencies are in need, as well. All donations are channeled through the City Emergency Operations Center to best manage the supply and demand. Visit [www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/covid19/donations-volunteering](http://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/covid19/donations-volunteering) for ways to donate, or call the info line at 907-435-3197.

## **Can I send food to the hospital?**

Meals made and delivered by business establishments are a welcome treat! Call (907) 235-0325 for delivery instructions or more information. There are dozens of employees working everyday (from housekeeping and maintenance to long term care and inpatient). Please designate the recipients. Sadly, homemade items are not accepted at this time.

## **Where can I get more information?**

SPH Public Information Officer Derotha Ferraro is available at (907) 399-6212 or email at [dbf@sphosp.org](mailto:dbf@sphosp.org). You can also follow [@SouthPeninsulaHospital](https://www.facebook.com/SouthPeninsulaHospital) on Facebook, visit [sphosp.org](http://sphosp.org) for SPH updates, or [www.covid19.alaska.gov](http://www.covid19.alaska.gov).