

## **South Peninsula Hospital & COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions 7/10/2020**

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

Yes, free testing is offered to those in/with:

- Critical Infrastructure worker
- Fisheries worker
- Recent travel out of state
- Known exposure to a confirmed positive
- Anyone with any covid-like symptom, or sudden onset of an unexplained symptom\*
- Ferry passengers with tickets for extended journeys
- Anyone with a provider referral or for pre-procedure screening (*can only be done at the hospital location*)

\*Symptoms include fever, runny nose, headache, sore throat, body aches, diarrhea, rash, loss of appetite, loss of sense of smell or taste, or sudden onset of any unexplained symptom. Testing is offered 10am-8pm daily at the hospital's main entrance parking lot. Upon arrival, please remain in your vehicle and call 235-0235 for curbside 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.
- 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 we can treat as many as 30 patients in the unit.
- The Alternate care site is 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.

### **How do I learn if there are positive cases in our service area?**

Case counts are updated at <https://covid19.alaska.gov/> and 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 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, 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 providers now offer telehealth and/or in person visits. 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  
Family Care Clinic (907) 235-0900

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

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

The West Wing and SPH Birthing Center are taking all the necessary precautions to protect you. The West Wing is calling all clients in advance 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), spacing appointments farther apart to allow for additional cleaning and distancing, and staff are using PPE per recommended guidelines. The SPH Birthing Center is isolated from the rest of the hospital, staff change all clothing 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.

## Is it safe for me to come to South Peninsula Hospital for regular care and services?

Yes! South Peninsula Hospital takes your health and safety very seriously, and has instituted extremely thorough practices at every step along your visit to ensure you can receive the services you need while removing fear and anxiety about your personal safety. It begins with thorough screening questions at the front door, continues with every individual in the hospital wearing a mask, keeping safe physical distances, and increased cleaning and disinfecting between patient interactions. For more details on how your community hospital is keeping you safe, [read here](#).

## 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 it to others when interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing. Wearing cloth face coverings helps to minimize transmission while around others outside of your household. This recommendation aligns with current national [guidance](#). 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. All donations are through the City Emergency Operations Center. Visit the City [COVID-19](#) site for ways to donate and volunteer, or call the info line at 907-435-3197.

## Are visitors allowed?

Entrance is limited to only those with appointments for medical care or persons seeking care. Visitors are permitted only if accompanying patients to surgery, emergency department, inpatient, or the birthing center. No visitors are allowed in Long Term Care, nor to visit a hospitalized patient who is under investigation or positive for Covid-19. All visitors will be screened for symptoms and exposure, must wear a face cover, and will be restricted to certain areas within the facilities.

## 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](#) on Facebook, visit [sphosp.org](http://sphosp.org) for daily updates, or [www.covid19.alaska.gov](http://www.covid19.alaska.gov).