



# INFORMED

## FLASH: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates – A Message from Dr. Good

March 17, 2020

The last week has moved fast with information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the spread of the infection to states in our service area, including Washington, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio and Illinois. Every effort is being made by medical and political leaders to contain and flatten the curve of infection. This has included limiting access to ambulatory and elective procedures, self-isolating persons with symptoms or exposure, general social distancing (>6 feet for < 10 minutes) and reducing the frequency that people need to be exposing themselves to the potential viral spread.

The Medical Management teams at Health Alliance and Health Alliance Northwest have been involved in supporting these activities and in reducing the barriers to care for persons who may be infected with the novel coronavirus. This includes:

1. Providing 90-day refills of chronic medications.
2. Covering, with no member cost share, the appropriate medically necessary diagnostic laboratory testing for COVID-19, for all members of all group and individual fully-insured plans, our Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Plan and all Medicare Supplement and Medicare Advantage Plans. Members with self-funded plans may have different cost-sharing.
3. Auto-approval of chest CT scans in persons suspected to have COVID-19 with advancing respiratory symptoms.
4. Extending the length of authorization for elective procedures and surgeries that will now be delayed due to ACS recommendations.

Health Alliance and Health Alliance Northwest have followed CDC guidelines by increasing the number of staff working from their homes. We have also closed our offices for member walk-in servicing until further notice. However, our teams continue to work, utilizing virtual communications. Our staff remains available as always to answer your phone calls and emails.

We invite our provider network to visit our [COVID-19 webpage](#) for up-to-date information about the illness, our response and questions about coverage.

Since you are influential in your communities, we ask that you provide the following recommendations:

1. People in nursing homes are best kept in that environment. Try to prevent movement to hospitals or physicians' offices until red flags of the infection are present. A hospital may further expose them to the virus. Red flags may include:
  - a. fever
  - b. persistent cough
  - c. shortness of breath
  - d. chest pain or aches
  - e. change in mental status
2. Persons with unconfirmed respiratory infections should wear a mask and be isolated in their homes. They should not go to work. Please provide their employer with written information until diagnostic testing is available.
3. Only a person's Health Care Power of Attorney or close relative should accompany him or her to the hospital. To protect their patients and staff, hospitals may be increasingly restrictive in allowing access.
4. Personal protective equipment (gloves, facemasks, etc.) are in short supply in many areas. Encourage limited use by only those infected and follow [the CDC guidelines](#) within your offices. Some providers may be using the materials inappropriately.
5. Washing hands with soap and water is still a significant protector.

Although this pandemic is significant, healthcare partners are working together to prepare and provide support for these types of public health emergencies. Health Alliance and Health Alliance Northwest will continue to update our policies and procedures to support the healthcare efforts our communities need.

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Chief Medical Officer