

Coronavirus / COVID-19 FAQs:

At NCH we're focused on our patient-first philosophy and the safety of our employees. As always, our mission is for everyone to live a happier, healthier life. To that end, there's a lot we are learning about the Coronavirus, yet there's still a lot to uncover. Below are frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 that will help you understand the state of the virus.

Could there be asymptomatic people in the community unknowingly spreading the virus?

Yes. And those individuals are not marked to let others know they are "carriers." That is why it is crucial to wear masks, maintain social distancing and avoid groups in general.

What range of symptoms have you seen in patients? We are seeing classic fever and flu-like symptoms, dry cough, and difficulty breathing.

If you get COVID-19 do you become immune or can you catch it again? It is too soon to say...we are still learning about this virus.

Do masks really work and can the wearing of a mask cause unintended side effects? Yes...masks work! Since the early weeks of the pandemic, NCH has been doing its part to educate the public about the efficacy of face masks in slowing the spread of coronavirus. We have mandated masks for all employees and patients while at an NCH facility and feel strongly about the contribution masks have made in our exceptionally low rate of COVID transmission from patient to staff, and, most notably, our zero transmission rate from patient to patient. As time goes on and more study results become available, masks have been proven effective in curbing the growth of COVID-19 cases. Further, there has been no harmful or adverse effects shown from the wearing of masks by the average person.

What do I do if I feel sick? Keep in mind that current statistics indicate that well over half the population who get sick, have mild to no symptoms and can get well at home in self-isolation with no emergency care needed at all. However, if your condition starts to deteriorate, the CDC asks you to call your doctor. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice immediately.

How many people have contracted the Coronavirus? Numbers are changing daily. The most up-to-date resources are the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Johns Hopkins University. The numbers at NCH are posted daily on our website.

How long could NCH respond to a coronavirus presence? Taking care of our neighbors and our NCH family is our mission and priority. NCH will be able to deliver ongoing healthcare services to our community as a result of our connections with our community partners, the Florida Hospital Association as well as state and federal resources.

How long does it take for patients to get results after being tested for COVID-19? In-patients within the hospitals can get test results back within 2 hours. For those being tested for scheduled outpatient procedures, it can take up to 5 days to be informed of a positive or negative result.

Does NCH have enough protective gear to prevent exposure and spread to staff/patients? NCH has plenty of PPE on hand and continues to monitor our stocks daily. It is because of our supply chain partners and our affiliation with the Mayo Clinic Care Network that has helped NCH maintain an adequate inventory of PPE to adequately protect our staff and patients.

Is it safe to return to the hospital or my doctor's office for treatment? Yes!...NCH has taken many measures to insure your safety as well as that of our staff. NCH wants to remind the public that if you are sick, please feel confident you can safely come to any of our facilities. Don't wait. We don't want patients to experience an unnecessary personal health crisis. To date, and after thousands of COVID-positive patient interactions by staff and over 17,000 tests administered, only 1 employee has ever tested positive from workplace exposure (who fully recovered and returned to work months ago) while there has been 0 patient to patient COVID-19 exposures at NCH...all because of our diligent processes to keep our team and our patients safe throughout the pandemic.

Are there visitor restrictions in place at NCH currently? Due to the rising number of cases in our region, visitor restrictions are still in place at NCH hospitals except for cases involving children and end-of-life care. While these choices are difficult, we feel these restrictions are in the best interest of safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our staff, our patients, and their family members. More details can be found on our website at NCHmd.org.

Does NCH still need convalescent plasma? The NCH Healthcare System still has an urgent need for COVID-19 convalescent plasma and is seeking immediate support from community members to donate it. Plasma donated by a qualified candidate who has fully recovered from COVID-19 is transfused to a patient currently battling the illness with the expectation that the antibodies in the donated plasma can help attack the virus and boost the patient's immune system.

The actual donation takes 45 minutes to an hour, and convalescent plasma can be donated every 28 days at the NCH Community Blood Center, so even if you donated plasma a month ago, we hope you will consider donating with us once again. Please call 624-6504 or visit www.givebloodcbc.org for more details.

What is NCH's position on schools reopening in Collier County? NCH has been in conversations with the Collier County Public School System and we have recommended the same basic safety measures that we have been sharing with the community for several months now to slow the spread of Coronavirus.

Our position has been, and continues to be, to the adherence of CDC best practices of these three simple principles: mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing. As an added measure of safety, Collier County Public Schools are also mandating students wear eye protection as well.

Parents are urged to educate their kids about the value of these safety practices and why it is important for them to follow these measures both in and out of the classroom.

Is NCH currently offering elective procedures? NCH continues to offer elective procedures. At this moment, our surge plan has not been activated, and there are currently no plans at this time to postpone or cancel currently scheduled elective procedures.

However, we do monitor our census and our surge plan continuously. We will communicate to the community as well as to those patients scheduled for an elective procedure who may be impacted when and if our surge plan is activated.