



COOK COUNTY
HEALTH

SYSTEM NEWS

April 2020 - COVID-19 Special Edition

Emergency room services will resume at Provident Hospital at 7:00 AM Monday, April 20, 2020. More information below.

Letter from the CEO

Dear Cook County Health Friends and Partners,

As the county settles into a new normal of social distancing and stay-at-home orders, we at Cook County Health are increasing our efforts to reach out to the most vulnerable patients to provide a variety of resources.

- Our ambulatory clinics are reaching out to patients particularly at risk of COVID-19 infection due to certain health conditions. Through data that comes from emergency departments around the area, we have been able to pull a list of more than 2,000 patients who are at risk. Our team is reaching out to them to ensure they have the resources they need and, if required, offering virtual appointments for them. We are texting our patients educating them about symptoms of coronavirus and providing them with guidance and resources if needed.
- We continue to hold our FRESH trucks at our clinics, providing fruits and vegetables to patients who are food insecure and those in the community who are in need. Upcoming dates can be found [here](#). Our staff and the volunteers from the Greater Chicago Food Depository are working to ensure everyone who comes to the sites maintain social distancing measures and is healthy.
- We are communicating with our patients about the resources available to help them, including a mental health hotline and information about SNAP and unemployment. We have created multiple print brochures and fliers that are being distributed by community partners. More information is provided throughout this newsletter.



The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) has been working around the clock with public health and emergency management counterparts at all levels of government to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic since the first COVID-19 case was identified on Jan. 24 in Cook County. This has included case investigations, contact tracing and monitoring; disease surveillance and control; and providing situational updates and guidance to the public, media and partners.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the Provident Hospital Emergency Room will reopen on Monday, April 20, at 7 a.m. following efforts designed to improve the safety of patients and staff and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

This is an unprecedented time in the history of our country and this organization. I want to thank our health care workers for coming to work every day to care for our patients and support their coworkers. And on behalf of CCH and all the first responders, I urge everyone to follow the stay-at-home order, wash your hands frequently and to practice social distancing at all times. These acts will help flatten the curve and keep our healthcare workers safe and healthy to do life-saving work in this moment and well into the future.

If we all do our part, we will get through this moment together. A moment has the potential to define healthcare for the next several generations. A moment can inspire the high school sophomore to consider a career as a nurse, respiratory therapist or doctor or the college freshman to become a police, fireman or other first responder. This moment will most certainly lead to lessons learned, medical advancements and treatments for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. We must stay the course or risk losing this important moment in our history.

I am honored to be leading an extraordinary group of individuals and I am incredibly proud of the work being done throughout our system to ensure all Cook County residents have access to care regardless of income, immigration or insurance status.

Sincerely,



Debra D. Carey
Interim CEO

Emergency room services will resume at Provident Hospital at 7:00 AM Monday, April 20, 2020

On April 3, Cook County Health announced the need to temporarily suspend emergency room services at Provident Hospital, a decision that was not made lightly, but one that was necessary for the safety of patients and staff. The emergency room was closed on April 6 and officials committed to reopening it no later than May 6, sooner, if possible. Provident Hospital and Sengstacke clinic have remained open serving nearly 1,000 individuals since April 6.

Over the course of the last two weeks, a number of improvements were completed including:

- Reconfigured and installed new seating to meet social distancing guidelines. Created designated seating area for suspect COVID patients.
- Creation of mobile registration units to reduce the need for patients to sit in a confined space for registration, allowing for social distancing.
- Reconfigured existing nursing workstations to meet social distance standards.
- Reconfigured process flows to reduce unnecessary movement in the ED.
- Relocated support services so that interaction between patients and staff occurs following the COVID screening process.
- Designated triage, exam and isolation areas for COVID-19 patients.
- Installed communication systems to allow safe interactions between staff and patients.
- Created separate workrooms for doctors and staff.

The size and configuration of the Provident Emergency Room was a consideration in the decision to build a new facility announced last year by Cook County Health. These improvements will provide a safer environment for all patients and staff in the emergency room, particularly during this pandemic.

The Latest COVID-19 Information in Cook County



For the latest Cook County COVID-19 updates, text “AlertCook” to 888-777. You can also call the **Cook County Department of Public Health** hotline at 708-633-3319 or email ccdph.covid19@cookcountyhhs.org.

CCDPH has also launched a website for residents to view COVID-19 case counts by municipality. Click here to visit [the site](#). You can view the breakdown in cases by age, sex, race/ethnicity and severity.

Other Sources for Information

Illinois Department of Public Health

- Call 800-889-3931
- Email DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV

Chicago Department of Public Health (City of Chicago residents)

- Call 312-746-4835
- Email coronavirus@chicago.gov

Cook County Health Participating in COVID-19 Drug Trial

Cook County Health is conducting some of the first clinical trials for a possible treatment for COVID-19.

Cook County Health is one of only three medical centers in Chicago and one of 50 major medical centers worldwide leading two different studies. Both are phase III, randomized trials looking at the safety and efficacy of a potential drug treatment for patients diagnosed with either moderate or severe COVID-19.

The antiviral drug known as remdesivir has been used to treat patients diagnosed with Ebola, as well as animals with the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) – categorized as other coronaviruses. Infectious disease experts are studying the medication to see if it can directly block replication of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 illness.

“In response to this COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgency for safe and effective therapies,” said Dr. Gregory Huhn, an infectious disease physician for Cook County Health and principal site investigator of the drug trials. “This worldwide study of remdesivir could potentially address the serious medical and public health need to quickly identify an effective treatment to help save lives.”

Safety Guidelines at Cook County Health

As the COVID-19 public health crisis continues to escalate, Cook County Health is taking steps to ensure the safety of our patients and our staff.

Universal Masking

Since March, all patients and staff receive a mask when they enter our facilities.



The universal-masking policy requires all personnel (clinical or otherwise) to wear a mask when working in order to reduce the risk of transmission from anyone who may be carrying the disease but is asymptomatic.

As a reminder, if you are wearing a mask, it should cover your nose and your mouth and rest under your chin. It should not be hanging around your neck or arm. Avoid touching the mask while using it. To remove the mask, remove it from behind and do not touch the front.

Visitor Restrictions

To protect our patients and staff, Cook County Health no longer allows visitors. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis with the approval of hospital administration.

We ask individuals who are not sick and do not need to see a doctor to please stay home. All patients and approved visitors must wear a mask.

Appointment Guidelines

CCH is conducting as many clinic appointments by telephone as possible. Patients will receive a call in advance of their appointment providing guidance as to whether they need to come in or can stay home and have a telephone appointment. Please make sure the registration team has the best phone number to reach you for any changes to the schedule.

COVID-19 Guidance for Pregnant Women and New Mothers

To protect our patients and staff, Cook County Health has put the following procedures in place for OB patients:

- Visitor restrictions extend to outpatient OB appointments as well.
- For deliveries, the patient’s birthing partner must accompany them to the unit at the same time the patient arrives in order to receive the necessary permissions and wrist band. That partner must stay if they wish to be there for the birth. Coming and going from the hospital is not permitted as it poses exposure risk.

Regarding pregnancy and COVID-19, pregnant women should follow the same guidelines as the public:

- Cover your cough (using your elbow is a good technique)
- Avoid people who are sick
- Clean your hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer



Giving Back and Paying it Forward

Many people have asked how they can help Cook County Health team members on the front lines who are combating COVID-19.

- The **Cook County Health Foundation** has set up a **coronavirus fund** which will be used to provide additional resources to our patients, families and communities. For more information and to donate, click [here](#).
 - As COVID-19 continues to impact the communities we serve, we are committed to keeping staff safe. Because there is a nationwide shortage of critical personal protective equipment (PPE) across the country, we are taking donations. If you have questions or are unsure if your item qualifies, please contact Dan Ruiz, Supply Chain, at druiz@cookcountyhhs.org.
1. *Masks* – Both N95 and procedural masks will be accepted. These masks can be found across many industries and have been deemed appropriate to use in the health care setting by the CDC. Commonly found in the construction and landscaping industry among others, we will gladly accept any new and unused masks.
 2. *Hand sanitizer* – Personal sized hand sanitizer that has been unopened. CDC guidelines encourage sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol composition.
 3. *Eye protection* – This includes any new or unused goggles, safety glasses or face shields.
 4. *Disinfectant wipes* – All brands of unopened pre-moistened wipes are accepted.

Thank You for Your Food Donations



Cook County Health would also like to thank the individuals and restaurants who have sent food to ensure our frontline workers are never hungry.

If you are interested in donating to clinic staff who are working against COVID-19, contact Jack Daley at jadaley@cookcountyhhs.org.

Gentleness, Focus and Breathing Practice: Essentials for Staying in Place

By Dr. Linda J. Strozdas, Department of Psychiatry

As the reality of the current pandemic sinks in, the emotional discomfort of these difficult times may leave us feeling anxious and weary. We either lash out at those around us, or hold our feelings inside us where they fester and may take a toll on our body.

Instead of trying to fight these feelings, we can turn to our breath to focus our thinking.

The rhythm of inhale/exhale is unique to each person and drives several systems throughout our bodies. Our breath works harmoniously with each system to put our bodies in a state of ease or energized activity.

However, it is not helpful to stay in a state of heightened alert all the time.

We can come back to ourselves by slowing our breathing pace with diaphragmatic or belly breathing.

While lying down, place your left hand on your chest and your right hand gently over your belly button. As you gently breathe in and out, notice the feel of the muscle's lift and fall beneath your right hand. As you continue to observe this motion, think of the movement of waves on a balmy Lake Michigan. Imagine you are on a raft, calmly enjoying a lovely day. On each inhale, say to yourself, "I am home. I am calm. I am safe." Or wish the same for others, "I wish calm and safety."

You can also practice diaphragmatic breathing in a seated position.

While seated, take a moment to remind yourself, "I am lovable. I am capable. I am here. I am home." Check your body for tension. Relax your facial muscles, allowing your jaw to fall open slightly. Let your shoulders drop. Let your arms fall to your sides. Allow your hands to loosen so that there are spaces between your fingers. Uncross your legs or ankles. Feel your thighs sink into your chair. Let your legs fall comfortably apart. Feel your shins and calves become heavier. Feel your feet grow roots into the floor. Now gently breathe in slowly. Now breathe out gently and slowly. Notice the feel of your breath in and out, and each time you exhale, try to relax even more.

Innumerable books and studies support the many benefits of regularly nurturing our ability to "stay in place" or "come home" through one's breathing practice.

Additional Resources for Help

- [The Greater Chicago Food Depository](#)
- [Updates on SNAP Work Requirements \(\[English\]\(#\), \[Spanish\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [Information on expanded Illinois unemployment benefits](#)
- [Chicago Public Schools Meal Sites](#)
- [How to Help with Your Child's Anxiety](#)

Hotline Information

Cook County Health understands that you may be going through difficult times during the COVID-19 emergency. We are committed to your well-being and would like to share some information and resources that you may find useful.

If you are experiencing stress and mental health issues related to COVID-19, you can **text “TALK” to 55-2020, or for Spanish, “HABLAR” to the same number, 55-2020** to speak to a mental health professional. You will receive a call within 24 hours. It's free and anonymous.

Individuals can also text 55-2020, with key words such as “unemployment” or “food” or “shelter” and will receive information on how to access supports and services.

If you have concerns about paying your utility bills, please note that utilities will not be disconnected until after the emergency order has been lifted.

If you have concerns regarding the possibility of eviction, know your rights and be aware that a court order must be served to you, and courts are not in session until, at the earliest, May 18. If you need additional assistance, call 3-1-1 in Chicago, or Metropolitan Tenants Organization at 773-292-4988.

You can also call the medical social worker at your clinic or 312-864-0200 and ask to speak to a social worker for further information about resources.

Remember to Complete Your Census



BE COUNTED.



The COVID-19 crisis serves as yet another reminder of the importance of having access to health care and social programs.

Many of these programs depend on federal funding, the amount of which is determined by the results of the 10-year census.

While April 1 was Census Day, you can still complete the census. You should have received your census questionnaire in the mail. You can answer these questions online, by phone or mailing in your response. It only takes a few minutes.

Ensuring that every citizen is counted by the census is critically important to the well-being and future of Cook County, particularly in areas on the city's west and south sides that are often underreported.

The data gathered by the census is used to distribute billions in federal funds to assist local communities for important things like transportation, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and COVID-19 emergency response.

We hope that you will take the time before the end of year deadline to complete the census survey for your household.

Please also encourage your family, friends and neighbors to complete theirs.

Cook County Health in the News

Cook County Health physicians have been educating the public through the media about how the

virus is spread, precautions residents should take and what is being done to ensure minimal spread.

Chicago Tribune

[The race for an effective COVID-19 treatment: Hunches, trials and no clear answer](#)

CHICAGO DEFENDER
A Real Times Newspaper

[The Impact of COVID-19 on Black Communities – A Tele Town Hall Meeting](#)

WGN9
TELEVISION CHICAGO

[Coronavirus could hit low-income, minority communities harder due to health care disparities](#)


UNIVISION
CHICAGO

[Hospital Stroger en Chicago se prepara para un aumento de pacientes con coronavirus](#)


NBC NEWS

[Cook County Health Conducts Clinical Study For Possible Coronavirus Treatment](#)



['Everyone is afraid' as Illinois virus cases spike](#)

Visit our website at cookcountyhealth.org

If you would like to invite a representative from CCH to attend a community event, please send an email to events@cookcountyhhs.org.

To provide feedback on CCH Community News, update your contact information, or unsubscribe, please email Marcelino Garcia, Director of Community Affairs, at mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org.