

COVID-19 Pandemic

Following the outbreak in Wuhan, China in late 2019, the United States began reporting the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as early as January 21st, 2020. Today, all 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, Northern Marianas, and the US Virgin Islands have reported cases. Cumulative numbers of confirmed or suspected cases continue to change on a day to day, and even on an hourly basis (CDC, 2020a).

According to the CDC, COVID-19 symptoms have the ability to appear between 2-14 days after exposure. This timeframe is largely based off of the MERS-CoV virus incubation period. Symptoms consist of a fever, cough, and shortness of breath. As symptoms exasperate it is crucial for patients or healthcare providers to seek emergency care when they have difficulty breathing, are experiencing pain/pressure in the chest, confusion/ unable to arouse, or if they have develop bluish on the lips or face. Older adults with underlying health conditions such as heart, lung disease, or diabetes are at a higher risk of COVID-19 complications, as well as those who are immunocompromised (CDC, 2020b).

The shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has become a challenge to the healthcare system and medical personnel, leaving facilities to discover other ways to both protect themselves and provide quality care. Below are strategies recommended by the CDC for optimizing PPE supplies (CDC, 2020c):

- [Eye Protection Supply](#)
- [Isolation Gowns](#)
- [Facemasks](#)
- [N95 Respirators](#)
- [Ventilators](#)

The reuse of PPE has also posed as a challenge for healthcare establishments, specifically when it comes to the decontamination and reuse of filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs). Currently, there is no data to support efficacy of decontamination when it comes to these kinds of respirators. If healthcare providers are to use decontaminated FFRs, they should consider the following recommendations (CDC, 2020c):

- Before/after touching or adjusting a FFR, wash hands or use an alcohol based sanitizer
- Refrain from touching the inside of the respirator
- Use clean gloves when donning and seal checking
- Inspect for compromised integrity of the FFR
- Check all parts of the FFR for any decontamination damage
- Discard FFRs that have been compromised or if seal checks cannot be successfully completed
- Seal checks should be completed immediately once FFR is donned

Additional strategies can be found on the [CDC's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) website.

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) has recommended the following strategies, as a way providers and healthcare professionals can protect themselves and those around them (ISDH, 2020):

Before work

- Take off any jewelry or watches
- Wear clean scrubs into work
- Bring change of scrubs in a washable bag
- When packing lunch, use a disposable bag
- Remove any nail polish and wash hands

During work

- Sanitize badges, glasses, phone, work station and stethoscope
- Wash hands before and after each patient or when touching surfaces

- Avoid shaking hands or high-fives
- Do not rush when donning PPE

After work

- Change out of scrubs and place them in a washable bag, wear clean clothes home
- Wipe down shoes worn at work and keep them at work, if possible
- Sanitize badges, glasses, phone, and stethoscope
- Shower at work or immediately once home
- Put scrubs/clothing and the washable bag holding them in the washer
- Keep shoes outside
- Place any used water bottles and tupperware in the dishwasher

This is a stressful and anxious time for everyone including fellow providers, healthcare staff, and patients alike, leaving all groups more susceptible to mental health concerns. The American Medical Association (AMA) has provided strategies that all health care professionals can use when it comes to their staff, their patients, and their own mental health needs (AMA, 2020).

- Feel free to feel your feelings
- Employ coping strategies
- Check-in with yourself
- Reduce time spent on the news and social media
- Be fortified by remembering the importance and meaning of your work
- Adjust staffing procedures and schedules, when possible
- Offer access to psychosocial support to staff
- Monitor and review staff member well-being
- Create an environment of open communication for staff
- Establish a system to identify and provide care for mental health conditions for patients
- Facilitate additional training for frontline staff
- Verify referral pathways for patients
- Provide clear understandable communication to patients
- Incorporate guidance about stress into general care practices for patients

Below are additional resources for providers and healthcare professionals regarding COVID-19 and mental health topics regarding COVID-19.

Provider & Healthcare Staff Sources:

[Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education \(ACCME\): COVID-19 Clinician Resources](#)
[American Academy of Family Physicians \(AAFP\): Respond to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
[American Board of Internal Medicine \(ABIM\): Coronavirus Updates](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Sequence for Putting on Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
[Indiana Hospital Association \(IHA\): Indiana Hospitals' Response to Coronavirus](#)
[Indiana State Department of Health \(ISDH\): Indiana's Novel Coronavirus Response](#)
[Indiana State Department of Health \(ISDH\): Video Center COVID-19 Updates](#)
[Indiana State Medical Association \(ISMA\): COVID-19 Resources](#)
[National Institute of Health \(NIH\): Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
[Personal Protective Equipment for COVID-19 Care Video](#)

Patient, Provider, & Healthcare Staff Mental Health Sources:

[American Hospital Association: COVID-19 Stress and Coping Resources](#)
[American Psychological Association \(APA\): Keeping Your Distance to Stay Safe](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): *COVID-19 Stress and Coping*
Mayo Clinic: *COVID-19 and Your Mental Health*
Mental Health America (MHA): *Mental Health and COVID-19 – Information and Resources*
National Institute of Mental Health (NIH): *Coping with Traumatic Events*
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: *Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health*

Article Resources:

American Medical Association (AMA). (2020, April 3). Managing mental health during COVID-19. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/managing-mental-health-during-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, April 13-a). Cases in U.S. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, March 20-b). Symptoms of Coronavirus. Retrieved April 14, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, April 9-c). COVID-19 Decontamination and Reuse of Filtering Facepiece Respirators. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/decontamination-reuse-respirators.html>

Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). (2020, April 9). COVID-19 Provider Webcast. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <http://videocenter.isdh.in.gov/videos/video/4032/>