



## To our valued patients:

**As you are almost certainly aware, there is a rapidly expanding public health crisis around the world related to Coronavirus Disease 2019, aka COVID-19. We understand and share your concerns as patients, family members, fellow healthcare workers, and members of the community.**

At this point, there is still significant uncertainty both within the public as well as the medical community regarding the current spread of disease and its features. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to refer to the following sites for reliable, up-to-date information:

**Arizona Department of Health Services: [azdhs.gov](http://azdhs.gov)**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)**

**World Health Organization: [who.int](http://who.int)**

### ***Everyone should be prepared and diligent, yet not panicked.***

Social distancing, hand washing, and proper respiratory hygiene (covering your cough or sneeze) will help to slow the spread of this disease, like controlling influenza and the many other dangerous infections we see regularly. If we can slow the spread to avoid overwhelming the already stressed healthcare system, and if people without life threatening symptoms stay home allowing those with severe disease (whether from COVID-19 or all the “regular” illnesses and injuries) to be treated, outcomes will be much better. Hence, the drastic measures across the country. Please keep in mind that the supply of food and household items for the general public is not nearly as significant of a threat as the limited capacity of healthcare workers, hospital beds, and ventilators. So please limit your trips to crowded stores to only those items you need, and only go to the hospital in an emergency.

### **SYMPTOMS AND RISK OF COVID-19:**

As you can read on the sites above, the symptoms typically start mild then progress, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Age and underlying conditions appear to strongly correlate with severity. Children are at low risk for serious disease, while elderly are at much higher risk. Most of us will be infected and will recover (similar to other colds and flu – not at all pleasant yet survivable), however we need to ensure those with severe symptoms have access to the care they require as there will be significantly higher numbers of severe cases requiring respiratory support (oxygen and mechanical ventilation) compared to other respiratory infections.

### **IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT INFECTION:**

The testing is becoming available, yet supplies are very limited, so it will be prioritized for higher risk individuals. Influenza and other respiratory infections are still prevalent and testing for those will continue as indicated (you can also still get a flu shot if you haven't!). Stay tuned to the websites above, particularly AZDHS, for updates on more widespread testing (perhaps drive-thru?) as it becomes available.

**MOST CASES CAN BE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED AT HOME**, and we encourage those without difficulty breathing to STAY AT HOME away from others, rest, stay hydrated, and take OTC medications as needed to treat the symptoms. This may include taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) to manage fevers, aches, and sore throat, as well as cough drops, dextromethorphan (Delsym/Robitussin), guaifenesin (Mucinex), and antihistamines for a severe cough.

**IF YOU EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY BREATHING, GO TO AN ER.** Call 911 if unable to get to the ER safely on your own.



**ANYONE WITH A POSSIBLE ACUTE INFECTION (FEVER, COUGH, SHORTNESS OF BREATH) MUST WEAR A MASK TO ENTER THE BUILDING AND AT ALL TIMES DURING VISIT. PLEASE ALSO USE CAUTION TO AVOID TOUCHING SHARED SURFACES.** You should be immediately taken to a room or wait in your car. COVID-19 is transmitted primarily via respiratory droplets, meaning if you cough or sneeze in the open, infectious particles spread several feet contaminating the air and surrounding surfaces.

While many people with a cough have other conditions such as asthma/COPD or a "regular cold," your compliance with this will help to ensure the safety of our staff and other patients. We appreciate your understanding in trying to prevent the spread of respiratory infections. You will also notice staff wearing masks and taking extra precautions in an attempt to make sure that we do not contribute to the spread, both from potentially asymptomatic infected staff to you, and from the office to our homes and families.

#### **FOR PATIENTS SCHEDULED FOR NON-ILLNESS RELATED VISITS:**

As always, your health and safety are why we are here, and we will continue to strive to provide you with the best possible healthcare. We understand your concerns about avoiding potential infections and are increasing the infection control related measures we already follow. All surfaces are disinfected between patients, and disinfectant is sprayed in the air of any potentially contaminated room. We are also trying to keep potentially infected individuals in a separate area. Even amidst acute infections, other chronic diseases and health concerns will require treatment, and we will continue to provide for those needs. *As of right now, the risk is still thought to be quite low to the general public*, however as we gain more information on the numbers of actual cases, we will adapt as needed, possibly eventually offering options for phone/e-visits for some conditions as appropriate. Stay tuned for any updates.

#### **FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC, PLEASE BE CONSIDERATE...**

- ... of your families, friends, and coworkers to prevent spread of infections and assist those in need.
- ... of healthcare workers and the system, particularly hospitals and first responders as they work around the clock to care for the sickest patients.
- ... of local businesses that still need our support and will also be trying to cope with significant changes.
- ... of your neighbors who may need a helping hand. If you are young and healthy, consider dropping off a meal or offering to pick up groceries and/or prescriptions for an elderly or ill neighbor. Nextdoor (a neighborhood social media app/site) already has posts from neighbors trying to help each other out! Also, a word of caution though to BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL SCAMS! Be careful when sharing any personal information, credit card numbers, etc.

#### **TIPS TO STAY HEALTHY:**

Sleep 7-8 hours per night, exercise regularly (150 minutes/week), get outside for some fresh air, drink plenty of water, try to keep a balanced diet, limit your alcohol intake, and avoid smoking. These measures will help to limit stress and boost your immune system.

For kids out of school, try to avoid crowded places or visiting elderly grandparents. Find a high school or college student, or another young person unable to work right now to help with caregiving if needed. Keep a consistent routine as much as possible, encourage educational activities and limited screen time, and when the weather's nice, get outside – kids should have at least an hour of physical activity daily!

As always, we appreciate you trusting us with your care and will continue to work with you as individuals and as a community to stay healthy! Please feel free to call the office if you have questions.