

Q&A for Patients

Health Care During COVID-19 Recovery Phases

FACILITIES

Q: *Are Newton-Wellesley facilities safe?*

A: Absolutely. Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) is uniquely prepared to provide safe care and services to anyone who comes through our doors. We are in a highly regulated industry, held to the most stringent infection control standards, subject to frequent inspections – and every one of our physicians and employees is committed to providing a safe environment for our patients, visitors and our entire team. Patients and their families can feel confident coming to the hospital or any of our ambulatory sites for care. NWH has a long track record of top safety ratings and just recently achieved a hospital safety grade of “A” for spring 2020.

Q: *What measures are you taking to keep me and my family safe?*

A: Our organization has committed to the Mass General Brigham Safe Care Commitment outlined below. You and your family can feel confident that we are taking necessary and important steps to keep you safe.

We screen to protect you, your families and our staff

- We screen all employees daily for symptoms. Anyone with symptoms of a possible respiratory illness is not allowed to work until they are better.
- We screen visitors to our hospitals and physicians’ offices for symptoms. Any visitor with symptoms is restricted from entering our hospitals or physicians’ offices.
- We test and screen patients for COVID-19.
 - o Admitted patients to our hospitals are tested for COVID-19 prior to admission and then screened for symptoms each day of their hospital stay.
 - o Patients visiting our hospital campuses and physicians’ offices for clinic appointments are screened for symptoms prior to their visit and again upon arrival.

If symptomatic, patients are cared for via virtual visits or in designated areas where we use personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

- o For walk-in locations, we adhere to best practice safety protocols in those settings.
- o When providing care in the home we screen patients for symptoms prior to the visit.

We clean our hands and spaces and make it easy for you to do the same

- We have increased the frequency and intensity of cleaning of all high-touch areas throughout our institutions.
- We require frequent hand-cleaning and have added hand sanitizer stations, so patients and staff can clean their hands easily and frequently.
- We follow special infection prevention guidelines for care provided in the home to protect our patients and our staff.

We protect everyone in our environment

- We require all people — employees, patients and visitors — at our facilities to wear a mask.
- We have rearranged spaces to accommodate physical distancing and prevent transmission of infections by removing chairs from waiting rooms, and in some high-use areas, installing plexiglass barriers.
- We limit visitors coming into our hospitals and physicians’ offices.
- We wear masks and follow social distancing guidelines when providing care in the home.

Q: *How will I know when and where to enter the building?*

A: We ask all patients to arrive promptly at their appointed time (no more than 10 minutes before). For many locations, patients with cell phones will be able to remain in their cars until we call to notify them that we are ready for

them. This will reduce exposure for patients, visitors and staff. For specific information about the arrival process for each area, please see our "What to Expect When Visiting Us" fact sheets at nwh.org/safeandready.

Q: Will it be safe to use the elevator?

A: We are limiting the number of people in an elevator to help keep you safe. We have increased the frequency and intensity of cleaning of all high-touch areas throughout the hospital.

Q: If I need a wheelchair at the hospital, is it safe?

A: All high-touch surfaces and equipment, including wheelchairs, are cleaned thoroughly and regularly under our new COVID-19 Safe Care Commitment guidelines. Our transport personnel will assist you if you need help with a wheelchair.

Q: What if I don't have a mask?

A: We realize that some patients may not have access to a mask. Rest assured we will provide a mask for any patient or family member who arrives without one.

Q: What if I need a translator?

A: We have interpreters who are available to patients. Please let your care team know if one is needed.

Q: If I go to the hospital, outpatient center or my doctor's office, will I endanger my family?

A: We are following all precautions to keep you, your family and our staff safe. We make every effort to separate the care of all COVID-19 positive or suspected patients. Additionally, we have meticulous infection control procedures addressing hand hygiene, surface cleaning, masks, social distancing and more.

TESTING

Q: Who is tested for COVID-19?

A: Admitted patients are tested prior to admission and screened daily. Other patients are tested when indicated by screening results. All patients scheduled for surgery and GI/CVC procedures are also tested.

Q: What is the difference between testing and screening?

A: **Screening** is conducted by asking you questions about any COVID-19 symptoms you have experienced. You may also have a physical exam and temperature check. **Testing** requires taking a swab sample from your nasal passages or mouth that is then sent to a laboratory for analysis.

Q: When and where will screening or testing take place?

A: Your physician will guide you through the process. You may be screened over the phone and/or in person. Depending on your care needs and schedule, this process may be repeated to ensure both you and staff stay safe.

Please note that you must have a physician's order in advance to be tested at our testing facility.

If you are experiencing severe symptoms, call 9-1-1 or proceed to your nearest emergency room for care and testing.

Q: What is the difference between viral and antibody testing?

A: A viral test can be done to determine if you have active COVID-19 disease. This is done by inserting a long swab into your nasal passages or by obtaining a saliva specimen. If it is positive, you may need to seek further treatment and avoid contact with others to prevent the spread of the disease.

An antibody test is done by drawing a blood specimen. This can tell if you have previously been exposed to the disease.

WORKFORCE

Q: What are you doing to keep your workforce safe?

A: Along with the safety of you and your family, the safety of our team is our top priority. Newton-Wellesley is consistently adhering to these five standards related to workforce safety:

1. All staff must have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform the service or procedure and any related care for the patient. If appropriate PPE is not available to protect the health care workers involved in the patient's care, the service/

procedure should be cancelled.

- o Health care providers and other staff must always wear at least surgical facemasks, consistent with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Comprehensive PPE Guidance.
 - o Eye protection (goggles, visor or mask with visor) and N95 or equivalent respirator masks must be provided by the health care provider and worn by all health care workers while engaged in direct patient care for procedures with increased potential for droplet aerosolization.
2. Health care providers must restrict the number of health care workers in the treatment space to those individuals necessary to complete the service or procedure for the patient.
 3. Health care providers must have a written protocol in place for screening all employees for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entering the facility or office.
 4. Health care providers must adopt policies that address health care worker safety and well-being.
 5. The facility or office must ensure social distancing for providers and staff to the maximum extent possible.

Q: *How many staff have tested positive for COVID-19?*

A: As of June 26, Newton-Wellesley Hospital has had 137 employees who have tested positive for the virus. Many of those employees have fully recovered and have returned to work.

Q: *Do you have adequate staffing at the hospital, clinics and in doctors' offices?*

A: Newton-Wellesley as well as hospitals across Massachusetts were required to attest to having adequate supplies and staffing as part of each phase of the state's reopening. We are following all rules and guidelines and have adequate supplies, as well as an outstanding and dedicated workforce here and ready to care for you.

Q: *What is "attestation"?*

A: Leaders of hospitals and health systems must attest (declare) that they are meeting the Commonwealth of Massachusetts guidelines. Leaders must sign and submit to regulatory

bodies their personal attestations verifying their organizations are ready to provide care within the appropriate guidelines of each phase.

Q: *What capacity guidelines are you following?*

- A: The Commonwealth has asked hospitals or hospital systems to adhere to the following guidelines:
- **Hospital-Specific or Hospital System-Specific Bed Capacity Maintenance:** The 7-day average of the hospital's or hospital system's available, staffed adult inpatient beds (adult ICU and adult medical/surgical beds) must be at least 20% of its total staffed adult inpatient bed capacity (including staffed surge beds) on an ongoing basis during **Phase 3**.

Q: *Do you have enough personal protective equipment (PPE) available?*

A: Yes. We are committed to having adequate PPE on hand (greater than 14 days), as well as a reliable supply chain to keep essential items in stock. This will help keep patients, visitors and staff safe.

READY

Q: *What types of care are you providing now?*

A: Newton-Wellesley Hospital is fully prepared to provide safe, in-person care whenever an in-person visit is deemed necessary by your physician. For visits that can be conducted remotely, we have a broad range of virtual care capabilities. Please speak with your physician to learn more.

Q: *Did the hospital ever close during the COVID-19 surge?*

A: As we have since 1885, NWH remained open and here for you every day. In addition to caring for COVID-19 patients, we have continued to care for patients with emergent and urgent needs throughout this crisis.

Q: *What are your plans for patient care moving ahead?*

A: We will continue to prioritize the safety of our patients, their families and our workforce throughout the state's reopening process. As a nimble organization, we are well positioned to adapt to a "new normal" with safety as our guidepost, along with a commitment to innovating new ways to deliver care.

GENERAL

Q: I'm hearing about Mass General Brigham and Partners HealthCare. What's the difference?

A: Partners HealthCare was founded in 1994 by Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Since then, it has grown to include many other hospitals and affiliates, such as Spaulding Rehabilitation Network, Mass. Eye and Ear, McLean Hospital, AllWays Health Partners and Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Partners HealthCare now has a new name: Mass General Brigham, which is more representative of the scope of care provided. The new branding will be rolled out gradually; therefore, you may see messages, mailings or signage reflecting either name for a while.

Q: Where can I find general information and resources regarding COVID-19?

A: Please visit our page on [Coronavirus: What You Need to Know](#).

Q: Can I expect my patient experience to feel the same?

A: To keep everyone safe, we are making necessary modifications to some of our spaces and processes. The patient experience will feel different in some ways – in the same way the customer experience in a grocery store has changed – but it will still be the exceptional experience NWH is known for:

- You and your care team will have a relationship founded on respect.
- We will work with you always as a partner to understand your goals for your care.
- As always, you will be treated with the same dedication and compassion that we would offer to our own beloved family members.

Additional safety precautions are necessary for the health of patients and staff and to stop community spread. At times, the pace of scheduling and care delivery may be slowed. At other times, we will be able to leverage innovations in care, including:

- Telemedicine/remote care
- iPads for inpatients to connect with loved ones
- Convenient, extended hours

Q: Should I continue to postpone my care?

A: Patient safety also means taking action to get the care you need when you need it: *This*

is not a time to neglect any health concern. Putting elective and nonurgent health care needs on hold during the height of the crisis was necessary. Now, individuals should resume their planned care based on discussions with their physician. There are reports that visits for serious medical conditions – including cancer, stroke and heart attack — have dropped in recent months. Delaying essential care can have dangerous, unintended consequences, and we encourage you to visit us for any health concern you may have.

Q: What if I develop COVID-like symptoms?

A: If you are experiencing *any* of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose/nasal congestion
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches
- Inability to smell

Please notify us before you visit the hospital, so we may safely care for you. This will help us advise you on the best course of action to resume your care, whether it is an in-person visit or a virtual visit.

Q: What is telemedicine / a virtual visit?

A: This is a great option if you do not require an in-person visit or if you are not comfortable with an in-person visit. In some cases, we may be able to resume your care plan virtually. We can do this in real time over video or phone using your computer, tablet or smartphone. The provider will consult with you the same as they would in an in-person visit.

We use a variety of secure virtual video visit platforms; however, our preferred system is a Zoom platform that is integrated with Patient Gateway. Patients must have an active Patient Gateway account to use this preferred system. You will be prompted to download Zoom prior to your first virtual visit.

Q: How will I know if I must come in person or should do a virtual visit?

A: Contact your health care provider and discuss whether it is better for you to schedule an in-person appointment or to conduct a virtual visit.

Q: Are you certain that virtual visits are secure?

A: Yes, absolutely. We have worked with outside vendors to ensure your health information remains secure and confidential.

Q: What if I lost my job and health insurance?

A: In 1986, Congress enacted the Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act (EMTALA) to ensure public access to emergency services regardless of ability to pay. If helpful, please feel free to contact one of our [financial counselors](#), who can provide you with payment information/options.

Q: Can a friend or family member accompany me to my appointment?

A: To ensure everyone's safety and reduce the risk of transmission, no in-person visitors are permitted to accompany you to your appointment. While we understand this is difficult, this precaution limits everyone's exposure. There are a few exceptions, under special circumstances.

It is possible to engage a family member or friend in a visit via FaceTime or speaker phone during your visit to help with questions and listen to the care team's guidance for you. If this is of interest, ask your care team to assist you with this.

Q: Is valet parking available? Are valets being screened? Are they wearing PPE?

A: Yes. Our valet team has implemented the following safety measures:

- All staff undergo a daily health screening for symptoms and attest to wellness.
- All staff wear masks and gloves.
- Staff disinfect steering wheels, door handles, gears and keys for every person when they arrive and when they depart.

Q: Are there contact-free ways to pay for parking?

A: If you self-park, you can pay at pay stations and in the exit lanes using your credit card. You simply put the parking ticket into the machine and then pay by credit card by pushing the card in and pulling it out—that way but no one else needs to touch your parking ticket or credit card.

If you use our valet service or cashier, there is no way to currently pay "contactless". However, pay stations and cashier stations are disinfected frequently, and our valets and cashiers wear gloves, masks, and are disinfecting after each customer. Our valets are disinfecting steering wheels, door handles, gears and keys for every customer when they arrive and when they depart.

Q: How are we ensuring equity in COVID-19 care?

A: In early March, Mass General Brigham launched a system-wide COVID-19 effort to ensure that all patient, employee, and community-related efforts have equity as a foundation. We are working to ensure that:

- Communications to patients and employees are in multiple languages and accessible to patients with disabilities.
- Our interactions have the capacity to meet the needs of our diverse and multilingual population.
- We are deploying multilingual caregivers across the system to meet the needs of limited-English proficiency patients and employees.
- We are working in partnership with local communities to develop clinical and community responses to the disparities and social determinants of health that have led to and been exacerbated by COVID-19.



NEWTON-WELLESLEY
HOSPITAL