

PREPARE YOUR MEDICAL OFFICE FOR COVID-19



The new COVID-19 respiratory disease could affect your community. Therefore, we want to support you by providing the safety measures established by Puerto Rico's healthcare authorities and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That way, you will be able to prepare your medical office and provide care to your patients.

Ensure the safety and protection of your patients and staff. Establish and reinforce more rigorous prevention protocols in your medical office, such as the following:

- 1 Routinely evaluate and replenish your supplies and equipment promptly.
- 2 Reinforce office and equipment cleaning protocols.
 - A Increase cleaning frequency.
 - B Ensure that detergents you are using are suitable for disinfecting the area.
- 3 Restrict access for visitors, non-essential staff and suppliers.
- 4 Limit the number of patients in your office, according to available space and established social distancing norms.
- 5 Identify which of your patients may have higher risk levels and complications when infected with COVID-19.
- 6 Increase and reinforce precautionary measures when you become aware that the virus is spreading in your community.

Prepare and train your team as soon as possible

- 1 Establish a work plan to follow for the continuity of your operations, whether the work is done remotely or in the office.
- 2 Make sure the clinical staff knows the right way to place, use and remove protective equipment.
- 3 Provide guidance to your staff on how to recognize COVID-19 symptoms: fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
- 4 Implement procedures to quickly separate sick patients from those coming for follow-up appointments.
- 5 Stress hand washing and the correct way to cough.
- 6 Ask your staff members to stay home if they are sick.
- 7 Send staff members home if they develop symptoms while at the workplace.

Before receiving patients

- 1 **Communicate with your patients:**
 - A Continuity and access to treatment is fundamental. Notify your patients if you have made any adjustments to your hours, or have new instructions, if necessary, for access to prescriptions or visits. It is also important to notify them about the new emergency protocols you will carry out to provide medical care, either through an in-office or virtual visit.
 - B Prior to the appointment, ask the patient if he or she has had any symptoms related to COVID-19.
 - C Consider rescheduling non-urgent follow-up appointments or using electronic means for these services.
 - D Place preventive action signs at the entrances and in the waiting rooms.
- 2 **Prepare the waiting area and patient rooms.**
 - A Provide supplies: tissues, hand sanitizer, soap at the sinks, and trash containers with lids.
 - B Arrange the chairs according to social distancing recommendations.
 - C If your office has toys, reading material or other commonly used objects, eliminate them to prevent them from becoming a source of infection.

When receiving patients

- 1 **Place staff members at the entrance of your office to ask, compassionately and discreetly, if the patient has any symptoms.**
 - A Give masks to those patients with COVID-19 symptoms, so they can cover their mouth and nose.
 - B Limit visits of companions.
 - C Allow patients to wait outside the office in their vehicles, if they can medically do so.
 - D Place sick patients in a private room as soon as possible.

After evaluating a patient

- A Once the patient leaves, you must clean all surfaces, such as countertops, beds and chairs with disinfectants approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- B Provide home care instructions to patients with respiratory symptoms. Consider Telehealth options for follow-up.
- C Notify the Department of Health if you have patients with COVID-19 symptoms.

Stay informed through reliable sources

This will help you reinforce your safety measures and other aspects that impact your practice. These include:

- A The Department of Health
- B Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- C Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Reference:

Adapted from Prepare Your Practice for COVID-19, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/practice-preparedness.html>

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Clinic.pdf>

Other References:

American Medical Association

- Tips for maintaining your business practice during the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/tips-keeping-your-practice-business-during-covid-19-pandemic>

- COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

- Fast Guide to Telemedicine in a Practice

<https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/ama-quick-guide-telemedicine-practice>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

- Information and updates for this health emergency

<https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>

Puerto Rico Department of Health

- COVID-19 Section

<http://www.salud.gov.pr/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>