COVID-19

RETURNING TO ROUTINE PATIENT CARE

SANTA CLARA COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

For more information, visit
sccma.org/news-events/covid-19

Returning to Routine Patient Care

As Santa Clara County continues to flatten the curve in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to share our deepest gratitude to our physicians who are caring for and protecting our patients and communities. As physicians are preparing to return to routine patient care, SCCMA would like to encourage all to practice safe protocols provided below.

Disclaimer: This document does not constitute the recommendation to resume routine care or a rule that supersedes federal, state, county or organizational ordinance or protocols. This document will be updated as new information becomes available.

Maintaining safety for office staff

It's important to communicate with office staff (receptionist, MA, nurses) that their safety is of priority and all measures will be taken to ensure this. Practices should give extra care and attention to the emotional and physical needs of staff.

⇒ Communicating the new plan with staff members and making sure that they are comfortable with new protocols

⇒ Stagger staff and physician schedules in rotating teams or via telecommuting if possible

⇒ Shift vulnerable staff members to different roles to minimize their risk of exposure

⇒ Develop mask guidance for clinic

⇒ Providing proper PPE to staff members based on mask guidance

⇒ Staff should be trained on the proper use of PPE. Follow CDC guidelines for extended uses and reuse of PPE

Prior to Returning to Routine Patient Care

⇒ Post visual reminders (e.g., signs, posters) at the entrance and in strategic places (e.g., waiting areas, elevators) to provide patients and office staff with instructions (in appropriate languages) about hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette. Visual reminders in multiple languages can be downloaded from the CDC website

⇒ Put away items such as magazines, toys, water dispensers, or anything else that may be handled by infected patients

⇒ Providing washing stations at entry ways (possibility of reimbursement from Heroes Act, see reference section)

⇒ Limiting available office or facility entry way

⇒ Rearrange layout of waiting room/reception area to maintain 6 feet of social distancing

⇒ Install physical barriers (e.g., glass or plastic windows) at reception areas to limit close contact between triage personnel and potentially infectious patients.

⇒ Set up the exam rooms to complete as much paperwork, check-out process and patient intake in the rooms

⇒ Arranging office flow for patients to enter and leave through separate doors

⇒ Limit both waiting and exam room access to the patient only, with the exception of parents or guardians of younger children

⇒ Provide supplies for respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, including alcohol-based hand rub with 60-95% alcohol, tissues, and no-touch receptacles for disposal, at practice entrances, waiting rooms, and patient check-ins.

⇒ Sufficient level mask supply

⇒ Have sufficient cleaning products, masks and alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Prior to in person appointment

⇒ Schedule patients such that only a few are in the office at any one time and are able to maintain 6 feet of social distancing

⇒ At the time of scheduling and the day before the patient, patients should be screened for common COVID-19 symptoms – dry cough, fever, etc. and recent travel history. Patients reporting COVID-19 symptoms should be screened telephonically and referred for testing, if possible, before coming to the office

⇒ Communicate the new protocols and changes with the patients

⇒ Ask patients to bring their own mask and advise that they will be required to wear a facemask upon entry and throughout the office visit

⇒ Patient life circumstances may have changed upon return, staff should confirm patient information, contact information, address, phone number, patient insurance eligibility and any other changes at the time of scheduling

⇒ Ask patients to bring their own mask and advise that they will be required to wear a facemask upon entry and throughout the office visit

⇒ If patient refuses mask, offer the patient a virtual visit

Upon arrival and during office visit

⇒ Have greeters available at entrances to assure that patients are following safe entry protocols

⇒ Regardless of symptoms, take office staff, physician, and patient temperature with a no-touch thermometer before entering the office

⇒ Ensure that patients and staff are following appropriate hand washing protocol

⇒ Post a notice at the entry of the office instructing patients to NOT enter if they are experiencing symptoms

⇒ Triage personnel should have a supply of facemasks and tissues for patients with symptoms of respiratory infection

⇒ Have fabric or surgical masks on hand for patients that arrive without one

⇒ If available, provide remote check in for patients before arrival

⇒ If an examination room is not readily available ensure the patient is not allowed to wait among other patients seeking care

⇒ If patient states having possible symptom upon arrival, have patient wait in car and schedule virtual appointment to discuss symptoms

⇒ If patients with positive symptoms requires an exam, they should be isolated in an exam room

$\Rightarrow$ Care should be taken to disinfect door handles, chairs, countertop and exam tables between patients

Telehealth

To reduce potential COVID-19 exposure, many physicians have implemented the use of telehealth to practice safe patient care. Physician offices are encouraged to continue using telehealth to reduce potential COVID-19 exposure at clinic locations. For more information on telehealth, please contact SCCMA or visit the CMA Telehealth Toolkit for Medical Practices.

$\Rightarrow$ The American Medical Association has provided special coding advice for the COVID-19 public health emergency (see telehealth guidelines below).

$\Rightarrow$ More difficult to track patients for follow up care, physicians should consider adjusting practice workflows ahead of time to ensure that patients fill prescriptions and schedule follow up visits.

Financial Guidance

$\Rightarrow$ Communicate with vendors, letting them know that you will be returning to normal practice. Many may be willing to negotiate reduced rates and deferred payments

$\Rightarrow$ Continuing back to collection activity and creating a plan that would work best for your office and the patient

$\Rightarrow$ Contact a financial advisor for any questions or assistance (Contact SCCMA for assistance)

$\Rightarrow$ Contact your insurance agent or medical professional liability carrier to confirm coverage for any requested adjustments for COVID-19

COVID-19 Resources:

- AMA Physician Practice Guide to Reopening: https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/covid-19-physician-practice-guide-reopening

- AMA quick guide to telemedicine in practice: https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/ama-quick-guide-telemedicine-practice

- CDC guidelines for extended uses and reuse of PPE: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/OpenDoorForums/PodcastAndTranscripts

- CMA Financial Toolkit for Medical Practices:

  https://www.cmadocs.org/Portals/CMA/files/public/CMA%20COVID%20Financial%20Toolkit%20for%20Medical%20Practices.pdf

- CMA Telehealth Implementation Guidelines: https://www.cmadocs.org/telehealth

- CMA COVID19 Telehealth Toolkit for Medical Practices:

  https://www.cmadocs.org/Portals/CMA/files/public/CMA%20COVID19%20Telehealth%20Overview.pdf

- COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Office Workspaces: https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-office-workspaces.pdfhttps://www.hubert.com/product/95693/MasonWay-Rhino-Mini-Grey-Plastic-Dual-Sided-Portable-24-gal-Hand-Sink---15L-x-27W-x-55H?aitrk=hubert-shop&_aiid=13374&teng=go&beng=g&deng=c&peng=&ieng=104845382344&kieng=pla-294505072980&cieng=422962697691&cpieng=9555564147&feng=&cleng=EAIaIQobChMIzY3a6-bH6QIVCx-tBh0bsQGxEAQYASABEgLScfD_BwE&utm_source=google&utm_medium=pla&utm_campaign=HuertSmartShoppingSellers

- Mask guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

- Santa Clara County Public Health Department: https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/home.aspx

- SCC Testing Sites: https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/covid19-testing.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1UWUS_g2SbdXw-gqAjMhdTdpDr4WkhR8gV17kcVwdd0gR28xU_k7cydKA

- SCCMA COVID-19 Reference page: https://www.sccma.org/news-events/covid-19.aspx

- The Doctors Company, Reopening Your Practice During COVID-19 Resource Center: https://www.thedoctors.com/articles/reopening-your-practice-during-covid-19-resource-center/

- Thermal Scanner: https://www.altoros.com/solutions/mass-fever-screener-with-ai?utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=mlbl_camera_solution_fever_screener_usa_acquisition_search&hsa_cam=9732364226&hsa_grp=99960719499&hsa_mt=b&hsa_src=g&hsa_ad=428780381226&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_kw=%2Bthermal%20%2Bscanner&hsa_tgt=kwd-311613528415&hsa_ver=3&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhbbTgPzH6QIVRRx9Ch1J8g18EAAYASAAEgKIf_D_BwE