

**County of Santa Clara
Public Health Department**

Health Officer
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**HEALTH ADVISORY: COVID-19 Guidance and Strategies for
Healthcare Facilities in Santa Clara County**

DATE:
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TO:
Licensed Acute Care Hospitals and Outpatient Clinics in Santa Clara County

FROM:
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The Santa Clara County Public Health Department is closely monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 situation and the associated impacts on our local healthcare delivery system. As of March 5, 2020, a total of 20 people have tested positive for the virus in Santa Clara County. There are currently no vaccines or medications to treat the public for COVID-19.

Therefore, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department recommends that all healthcare facilities take additional steps to prepare for increases of COVID-19 in the community and urgently prepare for widespread community transmission. Much of this guidance is adapted from the CDC's [Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities: Preparing for Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States](#).

The following guidance is for all healthcare facilities in the County of Santa Clara:

- 1) Review healthcare facility Pandemic Influenza Plan. If you need additional information on Pandemic Flu Planning, please review [Health and Human Services Hospital Pandemic Hospital Checklist](#).

- a) Train staff and exercise plan
- 2) Designate a time to meet with your staff to educate them on COVID-19 and what they need to do to prepare. The following may be useful resources:
 - a) How [COVID-19 spreads](#)
 - b) [Clinical management](#) of COVID-19 patients
 - c) [Infection prevention and control](#) recommendations for COVID-19
- 3) Designate staff who will be responsible for caring for suspected or known COVID-19 patients. Ensure they are trained on [the infection prevention and control recommendations](#) for COVID-19 and proper use of personal protective equipment.
- 4) Prepare your facility to safely triage and manage patients with respiratory illness, including COVID-19.
 - a) Become familiar with infection prevention and control guidance for managing COVID-19 patients.
 - b) Place visual alerts (signs, posters) at entrances and in strategic places providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
 - c) Ensure sufficient supplies are available (soap, tissues, waste receptacles, alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - d) Ensure facemasks are available at triage for patients with respiratory symptoms.
 - e) Create an area for spatially separating patients with respiratory symptoms. Ideally patients would be >6 feet apart in waiting areas.
 - f) Think about designating a separate part of the hospital to care for COVID-19 patients to better enable cohorting of patients and staff.
- 5) Explore alternatives to face-to-face triage and visits
 - a) Expand (and then communicate to patients about) advice lines, patient portals, on-line self-assessment tools, and calling and speaking to an office/clinic staff if patients become ill.
 - b) Develop protocols so that staff can triage and assess patients quickly.
 - c) Determine algorithms to identify which patients can be managed by telephone and advised to stay home, and which patients will need to be sent for emergency care or come to your facility.
 - d) Instruct patients that if they have respiratory symptoms they should call before they leave home, so staff can be prepared to care for them when they arrive.
- 6) Preparing for potential personal protective equipment supply and staff shortages
 - a) There is currently a national shortage of Personal Protective equipment. CDC has provided guidance entitled, "[Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators](#)" to assist healthcare partners maximize use of limited stock of PPE.
- 7) All health care facilities in Santa Clara County should plan and implement vigilant general employee monitoring practices, including:
 - a) Ask all HCP to regularly monitor themselves for fever and symptoms of respiratory infection.
 - b) Ask all HCP not to report to work when ill.
 - c) Develop a plan for more active screening and evaluation of ill HCP. This could include having all HCP report absence of fever and symptoms prior to starting

work each day. It is likely that there will be a need to activate this plan in the near future.

- d) Require employees to report recognized exposures to COVID-19 cases to employee health.
- 8) Make contingency plans for increased absenteeism caused by employee illness or illness in employees' family members that would require them to stay home. Planning for absenteeism could include extending hours, cross-training current employees, or hiring temporary employees.