



Coronavirus / COVID-19 FAQs:

At NCH we're focused on our patient-first philosophy and the safety of our employees. As always, our mission is for everyone to live a happier, healthier life. To that end, there's a lot we are learning about the Coronavirus, yet there's still a lot to uncover. Below are frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 that will help you understand the state of the virus.

What does a 'Public Health Emergency' entail?

The public and hospitals should be accessing and following the CDC recommendations for management of the COVID-19 virus.

When did coronavirus preparations begin for NCH?

Preparing for a communicable disease outbreak such as COVID-19 is a practice that hospitals devote considerable time and resources to. Specifically, for COVID-19, NCH has been closely monitoring the virus since it first appeared in the media and also through patient care studies published in the medical journal Lancet and JAMA in February. The World Health Organization determined that COVID-19 was a Global Health Emergency on January 30th, 2020. This news made it clear that NCH may have to activate the pandemic plan that has been established.

How does a response plan for COVID-19 differ from those of Ebola or Zika?

The mobilization of teams who play a response role is not different than other plans, but the preparation is. The education of the public, patients and staff is different, as well as needed equipment and supplies for patient management.

What is the plan for infected patients regarding isolation at both NCH North and Downtown?

Regardless of location, The NCH plan in place today is to have any patient who is ill and believes they may be at risk for the COVID-19 to contact their healthcare provider who can consult with the Florida Department of Health to refer patients to the most appropriate place for their care. However, all patient care facilities and offices are prepared to identify and manage the initial care of a suspected case of COVID-19.

How many different hospital teams are involved?

All teams at NCH are involved. This includes our Hospital Administrators, Security, Reception and Registration staff, Nursing, and Emergency Room staff. Also involved are our providers including our Emergency Room, Critical Care, Infectious Disease providers and hospitalists. We also have transporters, environmental service workers, laboratory, and infection preventionists actively engaged in planning for this type of an event.

How long could NCH respond to a coronavirus presence?

Taking care of our neighbors and our NCH family is our mission and priority. NCH will be able to deliver ongoing healthcare services to our community as a result of our connections with our community partners, the Florida Hospital Association as well as state and federal resources.

**Will NCH have lab capability to do COVID-19 testing or will it be sent to a CDC lab in Florida?
What is the turnaround time for results?**

The state of Florida can now test specimens in Miami, Tampa, and Jacksonville state labs. Any presumptive positive tests will be sent to the CDC for confirmation. To date, NCH has not sent any specimens for testing.

Will the flu vaccine help people with COVID-19?

This is an emerging virus and no vaccine has been approved for use at the current time.

How long does it take for Florida patients to get results after being tested for COVID-19?

After being tested for COVID-19, it can take 1-2 days to be informed of a presumptive positive or negative result. All presumptive positive or negative results will then be sent to the CDC lab for final validation of results at the state lab. We will follow CDC guidelines regarding caring for any suspected COVID-19 case, if symptomatic as a potential positive case. This means that prior to any lab results we will follow CDC, PPE guidelines and care algorithms to assure the safety of our patients, staff and community.

Have more people been getting the flu vaccine in the last 2 weeks?

Our Pharmacy Director, Kim Thorp, reports there is no change from our seasonal volume of vaccines being dispensed.

Does NCH have enough protective gear to prevent exposure and spread to staff/patients?

NCH has carried out the CDC instructions to educate hospital staff and visitors on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE). We are closely monitoring our personal protective equipment and assuring staff have needed gear. We have our pandemic reserve supplies if necessary. We also continue to educate so that visitors and staff do not use PPE when it is not indicated for a clinical situation.

Who are our local partner agencies?

Our closest partners are Lee and Collier County Health Departments, Lee Health and Physicians Regional Medical Center, Fire, Police and EMS. Our hospital staff and numerous community partners are trained in the Federal and Local Hospital Incident Command (HICS) ‘all hazards approach’ and are prepared to partner with our local Emergency Operations Center if COVID-19 should develop into a county level emergency. There are dozens of community partners trained and available to handle a countywide emergency response for the community health and safety.

What should people do if they think they have a cold or something more?

Call your healthcare professional if you develop symptoms, have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you have recently traveled from an area with known cases of COVID-19. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and consist of fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Do any of the NCH hospitals have an isolation room? What does that look like?

NCH has over 60 isolation rooms between our two hospitals that look like any other patient room. The difference is that air flow is circulated to be removed from the room through ductwork that has a HEPA filter in place, thus providing safe discharge of any airborne particles.

What are the mechanics of a testing kit?

This is a swab of a patient’s throat, essentially with a Q-tip.

