

# COVID-19 UPDATE

We understand the growing concern surrounding the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The health and safety of our patients, physicians, and staff is our top priority. At Advocates for Children we have been actively preparing to identify possible patients with the COVID-19 virus and to prevent transmission to themselves, other patients, and visitors.

Based on current guidance and our own specific circumstances, we remain open on a modified schedule and ready to assist you however we can.

## Patients with Upcoming Appointments

We request only one caregiver to accompany patients at this time. Others accompanying should stay in the car if they cannot stay home. This includes siblings not being seen if at all possible.

If you have traveled internationally, traveled on any cruise ship, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed below, you are considered at risk.

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Children and caregivers with coughs and/or fevers will be asked to wear a mask. We may take temperatures on caregivers as well as identified patients.

Please call so we can provide phone triage and minimize exposure wherever possible. We are agreeable to doing parking lot visits in some circumstances. We are integrating telemedicine options in the near future.

We are revising our scheduling practices to accommodate the ever-evolving crisis. We are cutting down on routine well baby and child visits during the pandemic. We plan to see newborns and well children with problems that need to be addressed first thing in the morning.

We will schedule sick visits only after all well patients have left the building.

## **Families are not allowed to have food or drinks in our office for the foreseeable future!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

ABSOLUTELY no food and drinks are permitted in our office. Children's hands going directly to their mucous membranes while in a medical facility spreads viruses and other germs.

## **Laboratory Testing**

At this time, testing availability is still extremely limited and being prioritized by our public health partners for only those patients meeting specific criteria. Our patients are urged to call Centra Urgent Care in Forest prior to going there to see if the patient meets criteria for testing. We do not anticipate being able to do testing directly at our office. We eagerly await the availability of drive through testing in Virginia.

## **Our Higher Risk Patients**

Advocates for Children and Families takes pride in for caring for children with special healthcare needs. As the virus continues to spread, we want to protect and safeguard our most vulnerable patients. Children are more likely to be asymptomatic or have mild symptoms, but much is still not known.

**Higher-risk patients should consider changing any routine, non-urgent visits to a later date. These visits could be achieved through phone calls or telemedicine. We will also see some patients in their vehicles if possible, and at our discretion.**

## **Potential Disruptions to Our Regular Schedule**

- Depending on community trends with COVID-19, offices may reduce patient load, appointment types and prioritize accordingly.
- This pandemic is rapidly changing and we anticipate changes on a daily basis as needed.

For the week of March 23-27:

Open mornings Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday.

Open Monday afternoon if needed for sick patients.

Closed Wednesday, we will bring in staff for sick patients as needed.

## **How is our staff being trained?**

Our staff has been trained in infection control practices, standard precautions, and hand hygiene. Honestly, this is daily standard in pediatrics, but we are even more diligent in these trying times and are doing more intensive cleanings between patient visits. We have

designated part of the building for well visits, and other exam rooms for sick visits. We will minimize the time you spend in our waiting room.

### **Prevention and Social Distancing**

As you touch people, surfaces, and objects throughout the day, you accumulate germs on your hands. You can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Most people touch their faces at least 23 time per hour. It will take careful attention to change this habit.

We encourage you to follow guidance from CDC and the WHO. We have confidence in Drs. Fauci and Birx and feel confident in their recommendations. We do not recommend you take medical advice from politicians who are not in alliance with epidemiology specialists.

It is important for healthy children, teens, and millennials to follow social distancing recommendations to protect the more vulnerable people in our population.

### **Taking care of yourself by decreasing stress will ultimately boost your immunity. Here are some suggestions to help you and your children deal with the anxiety:**

- Spend time getting outdoors; play in the yard, walk and hike.
- Spend time with family reading, playing board games, listening to music, singing and laughing.
- Keep in touch with friends and family by phone or facetime
- Spend time with your pets.
- Sleep at least 8 hours a night
- Eat nutrient dense foods from nature
- Avoid sugar, which weakens your immune system
- Drink lots of water.
- Practice mindfulness, be hopeful and positive.

"99% of us are not at risk for a bad outcome. Take solace in that notion. Please do not be cavalier with other people's health."

*Kindness, caring and empathy will go a long way as we all deal with this crisis.*