Coronavirus Disease 2019 Frequently Asked Questions

What is COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)?

COVID-19 is a new respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that has recently been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. The first known cases originated from Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and has since spread around the world.

What are symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms range from mild to severe illness, including fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Older adults and individuals with comorbidities, such as cardiovascular, respiratory, or immunocompromised conditions, have been shown to be more susceptible to serious illness and/or death.

How is the coronavirus spread?

Similar to influenza or other respiratory pathogens, human coronaviruses are most commonly spread through the air by coughing or sneezing, close personal contact (within 6 feet) by touching/shaking hands, or touching a surface or object with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

What is ENA doing during the developments of COVID-19?

The Emergency Nurses Association is following and sharing all breaking news and resources from a variety of leading health care organizations, including the CDC and the federal government, through its COVID-19 web page and various media channels. The association is actively partnering with other nursing and health care organizations to submit requests to the federal government on behalf of our members. ENA has also hosted educational webinars and podcasts, and responds to inquiries as they come in.

Where can I find the most up-to-date and recent information regarding COVID-19?

The Emergency Nurses Association has created a webpage dedicated to COVID-19. Additionally, ENA encourages all emergency health care professionals to follow the CDC website for updated clinical guidelines and resources.

What should someone do if they are experiencing coronavirus symptoms?

The CDC encourages any individuals who think they may have symptoms to call their healthcare provider for guidance before going straight to the emergency department.

What can emergency departments do?

ENA suggests displaying signage prominently at facility entry points providing instructions to patients with fever and/or cough symptoms on hand hygiene and cough etiquette, as well as instructions on how to use tissues and/or facemasks. Limit visitors per CDC guidelines and have a separate designated triage area for potential COVID-19 patients. CMS has updated EMTALA regulations, including guidance to allow for alternative screening sites, RNs to perform MSEs (if criteria met), and patients to wait in cars after MSE.

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What should an emergency nurse do if someone presents with symptoms in the emergency department?

Nurses, physicians and all health care providers must work together as a team to **identify** high-risk patients, **isolate** them according to CDC criteria and **inform** local/state health departments. Implement CDC infection prevention and control recommendations as you screen and triage patients. Ensure you are following your hospital's infectious disease protocols to ensure safety of staff and patients.

How should we triage patients?

Patients with fever and/or respiratory illness symptoms should be moved immediately to a separate, well-ventilated isolation area where additional screening questions can be asked. Ask the patient about their recent travel history and possible exposure to others diagnosed with COVID-19 within the prior 14 days of symptom onset.

What should I do about PPE?

Nurses should use appropriate personal protective equipment per their facility infectious disease protocols and in alignment with [CDC Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](). Ensure that all surgical masks and sanitizers are secured from the general public.

Join ENA and ACEP as these organizations submit requests to members of Congress requesting more PPE. Through ENA's EN411 Action Network, you can easily send letters of support to members of Congress to further express the need for proper supplies and equipment to protect healthcare workers screening and treating suspect or infected patients.

Is there funding available?

On March 6, President Trump signed into law an $8.3 billion bill to fight the coronavirus outbreak. The funding will help health agencies prepare for and prevent the spread of the virus, support vaccine research and allows Medicare beneficiaries to access telehealth programs. The President also declared a national emergency on March 13, which releases up to $50 billion in federal resources to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

What are the testing procedures?

Criteria on who gets tested and how to handle the tests is always changing. Availability of testing in the U.S. is increasing on a daily basis. As this is an evolving situation, ENA encourages nurses to work closely with their infection prevention team on the testing criteria. It is important to note that coronavirus tests should not be sent via the lab tube system because the whole system could be contaminated if the samples were to open.

What is the best way for ENA members to express coronavirus-related concerns to ENA?

For peer support and questions, please post your messages to ENA Connect. For clinical questions, contact ENA at qualitysafety@ena.org.