

COVID-19 Advice for Community Pediatricians

We understand there has been a lot of confusing recommendations over the last few weeks and there are more questions than answers. While we certainly do not have all the answers, we thought some advice might be appreciated. This is just some possible advice and feel free to adopt these ideas as fit for your clinic. Additional information is available on the CDC website.

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- Limit the number of patients in your clinic and waiting rooms. To facilitate this recommendation consider postponing non-essential routine visits, which could include well child care for older children and adolescents
- Triage patients ideally before clinic arrival to determine who has respiratory symptoms. This could include anything from calling parents/patients and screening for symptoms before visits to encouraging parents/patients to call and cancel if sick when giving appointment reminders or scheduling appointments.
- Children with fever and mild respiratory symptoms should be encouraged to stay home, hydrate, and have parents call if there are concerns.
- Patients with respiratory symptoms should be roomed first and kept out of waiting rooms.
- Ideally providers should wear surgical masks, eye protection, gowns and gloves when rooming and treating patients with fever and respiratory symptoms. We understand that PPE is limited and supplies are back ordered. The best advice we can offer is to limit PPE to children actively coughing or sneezing and avoid any procedures in clinic that could aerosolize viruses including nasopharyngeal and throat swabs.
- Wipe down room touch surfaces after visits with children with respiratory symptoms including keyboards and stethoscopes.
- We DO NOT recommend collecting nasopharyngeal or throat swabs in clinic because of the increased risk of viral transmission to healthcare workers and the recommendation to wear N95 masks during specimen collection. Children felt to have influenza should be treated empirically.
- Testing will be prioritized to severely ill and hospitalized patients. High risk or exposed patients not requiring admission can be tested by writing a script for COVID19 PCR and sending patient to the Sparrow St. Lawrence campus for testing. These tests are being sent to Labcorp for now and have an approximately 5-day turnaround time. More testing sites may be established in the future. Children requiring admission will be tested in the ED.
- Protect yourselves and your families by not only washing hands and avoiding touching your face but also change your clothes on arriving home and wipe your phone, stethoscope, tablets and keyboards regularly with bleach wipes.
- We understand that some providers may meet the high-risk criteria and while we do not have specific advice we recommend discussing with colleagues as to whether your services are needed.
- On a positive note, children seem to be at lower risk with this virus!