

OFFICE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

During these strange, uncertain times, our priority is to keep our patients safe and healthy. We are closely monitoring the news about COVID-19 in Florida, the rest of the country, and the world. We are seeing rising numbers of cases as more testing is being done. This is not a situation that any of us have experienced before and we are working to manage within our practice. It is very important to approach this calmly but prudently and take common sense measures to prepare you and your family, and implement strategies to help decrease the likelihood of spread. The CDC has information available to all at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) that is very helpful. Locally, information at [floridahealthcovid19.gov](https://www.floridahealthcovid19.gov) will give more information on our state and county statistics and government mandates. We recommend you familiarize yourselves with these websites and refer to them frequently for updates.

Unfortunately, the existence of Coronavirus does not keep all of the usual, not-Coronavirus medical problems from happening. We see our role in this crisis to take care of the usual needs of patients that go on with or without Coronavirus, and to aid in keeping patients who do not require emergency care out of the local emergency rooms.

We are intending to keep the office open Monday – Friday. We are on a fairly normal schedule with office hours between 8 am and 4 pm. This may change with limitations in office hours as time passes.

What we are doing to protect our staff and patients.

We will be limiting the number of sick visits seen in the office. All patients are asked to report any recent travel or possible exposure to Coronavirus at the time the appointment is scheduled. Please inform the staff of any pertinent symptoms or history. This allows us to take steps needed to prevent unnecessary exposures. We are limiting the time in our waiting room by asking anyone with respiratory symptoms to wait in their car and notify us by phone when they are in the parking lot. They will then be notified by us when it is time to come in, rather than waiting in the waiting room. All patients with any symptoms including cough, fever, nasal congestion, runny nose, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea will need to wear a mask prior to entering the office. We can provide one in the parking lot if you do not have one of your own. Due to the nationwide shortage of masks, if you have your own at home, please wear it to the office. Also if you are able, please shower prior to your visit and put on clean clothing.

We are now offering Televisits (Video Appointments).

We will now be offering televisits for both acute sick visits and some follow up visits. This will minimize traffic through the office, avoid patients being in contact with others who may be ill, and still allow patients to receive care needed.

The procedure for televisits will involve us sending a text or email with a link that will direct you to the virtual appointment. Whether we text or email you will depend on which device you would prefer video chatting on, such as your phone or through your computer. We ask that you take whatever vital signs you can get at home (temperature, blood pressure, weight, etc) prior to the appointment and have all your bottles of medicine available. In addition, please make a list of the symptoms and problems you are having to insure nothing is forgotten through the appointment. We are offering a discounted price for these appointments and giving patients the option to pay over the phone or have a bill be sent.

What you can do to help stop the spread.

Some basic behaviors that will protect you and those around you are as followed.

1. Social distancing! Try to avoid even small group gatherings. This will be the main way to help stop the spread and is done by self quarantining (staying home) as much as possible, especially if you are ill or have been exposed to anyone with the Coronavirus or have traveled.
2. If a face to face encounter with someone is needed, keep at least 6 feet between you and that person.
3. Consistent washing or sanitizing of hands regularly and prevent touching face.
4. If you must be out, wear a mask in public. Although it will not protect you, it will protect others from you. Remember you can be contagious with no symptoms at all.
5. ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES TO DO THE SAME! This is a calamity that requires all of our efforts and will require many more sacrifices.

What to do if you are sick?

If you are having **mild – moderate** upper respiratory infection symptoms (such as cough, runny nose, fever, etc) **without** shortness of breath or difficulty breathing and you are NOT immuno-compromised or have other co-morbidities such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease and are not at high risk of infection, we recommend the following:

1. Start by implementing self-isolation strategies right away
2. Call us
3. Get plenty of rest and push fluids.
4. Use over the counter (OTC) medication such as Tylenol for fever and aches.

Please contact our office if you have any questions or if you would like to have a televisit appointment.

If you have **severe** symptoms such as the above plus difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, please call 911. You **MUST** call the ER first to inform them if you are at risk of COVID-19 due to travel, having been exposed to someone who has tested positive for Coronavirus or if you are a healthcare worker exposed to someone with Coronavirus. Please be sure to notify them so they are prepared for your arrival and you are aware of the safest protocol.

We are resilient and strong and we will eventually trade this difficult time for a brighter healthier future. We are here to help you.