



News Release

Contact: Amy Blaser, Vice President

Phone: (402) 562-3371

Email: aebblaser@columbushosp.org

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Overview of Columbus Community Hospital's COVID-19 Response, Resources and Readiness

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – Columbus Community Hospital (CCH) has been actively responding to the COVID-19 crisis since early this year.

On February 27, CCH leaders and the hospital's medical team activated their incident command and started meeting daily to discuss ways to best manage the COVID-19 situation. These meetings are ongoing and through these discussions, CCH has outlined a three-phase approach to manage the COVID-19 patient surge.

CCH is currently operating in Phase 1 of 3 of this approach.

Ensuring Adequate Resources

Since February, the influx of COVID-19 patients and patients under investigation have not taxed CCH, its staffing or inventory of personal protective equipment (PPE).

CCH has adequate supplies of PPE for patients, staff and visitors. It is continuing to accept donations of homemade masks for visitors as well as donations of unused, manufactured masks and N95s. CCH's materials management staff provide regular updates to the incident command regarding PPE and other supplies.

"Thanks to the ingenuity of our staff and generous donations from local businesses and the public, we have PPE that is sufficient to keep our employees safe in the near term," said Michael Hansen, CCH president and CEO.

Along with having an adequate supply of PPE, CCH has taken additional precautions to protect the health and safety of patients. For example, patients admitted to the hospital with COVID-19 are cared for with special isolation precautions, including negative pressure rooms to prevent cross-contamination from room to room.

CCH's emergency department, as a whole, transferred to negative pressure on April 16.



The hospital's inpatient floors consist of 13 negative pressure rooms in the acute and intensive care units and four negative pressure rooms in the Maternal Child Health Department.

As of May 13, CCH has four negative pressure rooms available in the acute and intensive care units and four negative pressure rooms available in the Maternal Child Health Department. None of the hospital's five ventilators are in use.

Cleaning and Disinfection

All rooms in the hospital continue to be cleaned to the highest possible safety standard by CCH's housekeeping team.

"Our housekeeping employees are worthy of special recognition as their work plays an important part in keeping our patients and staff safe," said Hansen. "They're on the front lines to ensure that all surfaces in our facilities are disinfected to the highest possible standard using protocols and safety measures recommended by state and local public health agencies."

Caring for COVID-19 Patients

COVID-19 patients at CCH are treated by our physicians using the most up-to-date medications and treatment regimens for COVID-19 that are researched by CCH's pharmacists and specialty teams. CCH has also expanded pulmonary support for critical care with tele-intensivists available for 24/7 patient consultative needs.

"Our entire organization has worked diligently to initiate a comprehensive plan and series of preventative measures to ensure that we are capable of screening, isolating and treating patients with COVID-19 while also protecting the health and well-being of other patients in our care and employees," said Hansen.

CCH continues to transfer critically ill COVID-19 positive patients to tertiary hospitals in Omaha and Lincoln and/or manage COVID-19 positive patients or patients under investigation (pending laboratory results) in-house in the acute care and intensive care units.

"The hospital is doing everything it can to ensure that patients, the community and the CCH workforce remain safe," said Hansen. "Our highly skilled staff members are well-versed in caring for a patient with COVID-19 while protecting themselves and others."

Elective Procedures and Telehealth Services

Elective surgeries at CCH have been suspended through June 1 and clinic and outpatient visits have been reduced to acute needs.

However, patients should not be deterred from seeking care for emergent or ongoing health conditions because of the pandemic.



Clinics are still seeing patients for necessary visits, and, thanks to a versatile IT Department, providers across CCH are using telehealth as a means of caring for patients. Now, instead of delaying appointments, many patients are given the option of accomplishing them by phone or via telehealth. Some of these visits are phone-only and others are offer interactive, face-to-face video.

Testing Availability and Statistics

Drive-thru assessment and testing for COVID-19 was implemented March 26 and remains available from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday.

Although testing supplies were limited in the early days of the pandemic, CCH now has a greater supply of test kits and continues to perform approximately 50-100 tests per day for patients who meet the criteria established by the local medical staff and health department.

CCH's laboratory professionals are working closely with the state and third-party labs to ensure efficient courier pick-ups to improve turnaround times for faster test results.

As of May 12, 2020, CCH has collected and performed 1,247 tests for COVID-19 with the following results:

- 739 negative
- 456 positive
- 52 pending

Visitor Restrictions

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community, CCH issued visitor restrictions beginning on March 4.

As of April 3, CCH issued a new policy to no longer allow visitors to its hospital or clinics. Exceptions to this new policy include:

- Patients who are delivering a baby may have one healthy, labor partner
- Infants in the NICU or post-partum infants may be visited by two parents/guardians
- Pediatric/minor patients (19 years old or younger) may be visited by one parent/guardian
- Dependent adults who need special assistance will be allowed visitors on a case-by-case basis
- Outpatients and clinic patients who need transportation and/or other assistance can have one healthy support person for this purpose
- Hospice patients receiving end-of-life care will be allowed visitors on a case-by-case basis



- Patients who are presenting to the emergency department may have one support person, as necessary
- Patients who need assistance with instructions prior to discharge may be allowed a support person on a case-by-case basis
- Patients who are suspected, but haven't been confirmed, to have COVID-19 may have one support person under extenuating circumstances

In line with previous visitor policies, all visitors and support people will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and asked about their recent travel history and possible contact with people with COVID-19. Visitors who fail these screenings will not be permitted to enter the hospital or clinic. Likewise, anyone with a confirmed or pending COVID-19 diagnosis is not allowed as a visitor or support person.

CCH also implemented active employee screening to include daily temperature checks the week of May 3.

Community Safety Precautions and Resources

Even though some directed health measures are being lifted across the state, in this area, cases of COVID-19 continue to rise. Therefore, as we begin to re-open businesses in our community, we want to do so without fear, but with an overabundance of caution and prudent decision-making, taking into consideration recommendations from our local health department and other key stakeholders.

That is why CCH is encouraging people to continue to practice the following to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home as much as possible
- Remain six feet away from others when in public
- Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face
- Wear a mask public

For more information on COVID-19, how you can reduce its spread or how CCH is handling the crisis in our community, visit the "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information and Resources for Community Members" page on www.columbushosp.org.

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