Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet for NIH Clinical Center Patients and Visitors

Community spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) is being detected in certain regions of the United States, including the National Capital Region. To protect patients and staff, the NIH Clinical Center has implemented a screening process for all patients and their visitors. The screening process is designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 inside the NIH Clinical Center.

Please Note: the NIH Clinical Center is not a screening facility for the general public. Members of the public who believe they have coronavirus should seek care from their primary care doctor.

What will happen at the screening location?
You will be have your temperature taken and will be asked several questions to determine if you are at high risk for COVID-19 infection, including whether you have symptoms of COVID-19 infection. If you have low risk for COVID-19 infection, you will proceed to your appointment(s). Everyone (patients, staff, and visitors) inside the Clinical Center will wear a surgical mask that the Clinical Center will supply.

What will happen if you have symptoms of COVID-19?
If you are found to have symptoms, you and any visitors with you will be asked to put on a face mask and will be moved to another location for additional screening which may include testing for COVID-19. The test requires a nasal swab.

What will happen to my family members or visitors who are not patients if they have symptoms of COVID-19?
Family members or visitors who have symptoms but are not patients will be asked to see their primary care physicians. They will not be allowed into the Clinical Center.

Why are the staff wearing protective gear?
Staff are wearing protective gear to avoid exposure to respiratory viruses, including flu, seasonal cold viruses, and COVID-19.

Why am I asked to wear a mask?
After screening, all patients and visitors will be given a mask to wear inside the Clinical Center when around others so that everyone is protected. We also encourage social distancing of at least 6 feet whenever possible.
If I get COVID-19 testing, does that mean that I have COVID-19 infection?
If you are tested for COVID-19, it means you may have symptoms of COVID-19. Other infections and other medical conditions can give you the same symptoms. Only a test for COVID-19 can determine whether COVID-19 infection is the cause of your symptoms.

How will I learn about my COVID-19 test results?
If you have a positive test for COVID-19, we will talk to you about the infection and your options for care. This test result will also be available with your other medical records on the Patient Portal.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?
Please contact your medical team if you have more questions about COVID-19.