

1. We need to push our local, state, and national leaders to close ALL schools and public spaces and cancel all events and public gatherings now.

A local, town by town response won't have the adequate needed effect. We need a statewide, nationwide approach in these trying times. **Contact** your representative and your governor to urge them to enact statewide closures. As of today, six states have already done so. Your state should be one of them. Also urge leaders to increase funds for emergency preparedness and make widening coronavirus testing capacity an immediate and top priority. We also need legislators to enact better paid sick leave and unemployment benefits to help nudge people to make the right call to stay at home right now.

2. No kid playdates, parties, sleepovers, or families/friends visiting each other's houses and apartments.

This sounds extreme because it is. We are trying to create distance between family units and between individuals. It may be particularly uncomfortable for families with small children, kids with differential abilities or challenges, and for kids who simply love to play with their friends. But even if you choose only one friend to have over, you are creating new links and possibilities for the type of transmission that all of our school/work/public event closures are trying to prevent. The symptoms of coronavirus take four to five days to manifest themselves. Someone who comes over looking well can transmit the virus. Sharing food is particularly risky — I definitely do not recommend that people do so outside of their family.

We have already taken extreme social measures to address this serious disease — let's not actively co-opt our efforts by having high levels of social interaction at people's houses instead of at schools or workplaces. Again — the wisdom of early and aggressive social distancing is that it can flatten the curve above, give our health system a chance to not be overwhelmed, and eventually may reduce the length and need for longer periods of extreme social distancing later (see what has transpired in Italy and Wuhan). We need to all do our part during these times, even if it means some discomfort for a while.

3. Take care of yourself and your family, but maintain social distance.

Exercise, take walks/runs outside, and stay connected through phone, video, and other social media. But when you go outside, do your best to maintain at least six feet between you and non-family members. If you have kids, try not to use public facilities like playground structures, as coronavirus can live on plastic and metal for up to nine days, and these structures aren't getting regularly cleaned.

Going outside will be important during these strange times, and the weather is improving. Go outside every day if you are able, but stay physically away from people outside your family or roommates. If you have kids, try playing a family soccer game instead of having your kids play with other kids, since sports often mean direct physical contact with others. And though we may wish to visit elders in our community in person, I would not visit nursing homes or other areas where large numbers of the elderly reside, as they are at highest risk for complications and mortality from coronavirus.

Social distancing can take a toll (after all, most of us are social creatures). The CDC offers tips and resources to reduce this burden, and other resources offer strategies to cope with the added stress during this time.

We need to find alternate ways to reduce social isolation within our communities through virtual means instead of in-person visits.

4. Reduce the frequency of going to stores, restaurants, and coffee shops for the time being.

Of course trips to the grocery store will be necessary, but try to limit them and go at times when they are less busy. Consider asking grocery stores to queue people at the door in order to limit the number of people inside a store at any one time. Remember to wash your hands thoroughly before and after your trip. And leave the medical masks and gloves for the medical professionals — we need them to care for those who are sick. Maintain distance from others while shopping — and remember that hoarding supplies negatively impacts others so buy what you need and leave some for everyone else. Take-out meals and food are riskier than making food at home given the links between the people who prepare food, transport the food, and you. It is hard to know how much that risk is, but it is certainly higher than making it at home. But you can and should continue to support your local small businesses (especially restaurants and other retailers) during this difficult time by buying gift certificates online that you can use later.

5. If you are sick, isolate yourself, stay home, and contact a medical professional.

If you are sick, you should try to isolate yourself from the rest of your family within your residence as best as you can. If you have questions about whether you qualify or should get a coronavirus test, you can call your primary care team and/or consider calling the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 617.983.6800 (or your state's department of health if you are outside of Massachusetts). Don't just walk into an ambulatory clinic — call first so that they can give you the best advice — which might be to go to a drive-through testing center or a virtual visit on video or phone. Of course, if it is an emergency call 911.

I realize there is a lot built into these suggestions, and that they represent a real burden for many individuals, families, businesses, and communities. Social distancing is hard and may negatively impact many people, especially those who face vulnerabilities in our society. I recognize that there is structural and social inequity built in and around social distancing recommendations. We can and must take steps to bolster our community response to people who face food insecurity, domestic violence, and housing challenges, along with the many other social disadvantages.

I also realize that not everyone can do everything. But we have to try our absolute best as a community, starting today. Enhancing social distancing, even by one day, can make a large difference.

We have a preemptive opportunity to save lives through the actions we take right now that we will not have in a few weeks. It is a public health imperative. It is also our responsibility as a community to act while we still have a choice and while our actions can have the greatest impact.

We cannot wait.

Clinical Screening Tool for Identifying Persons Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

March 15, 2020

The Department of Health (Department) has updated the clinical screening tool health care providers use in the identification of persons under investigation or suspected for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The clinical screening tool is intended to assist health care practitioners in understanding their role in identifying individuals, specimen collection, shipping of specimens, and notification of local county health departments, as appropriate.

The State Surgeon General, Dr. Scott Rivkees, is currently hosting a weekly health care provider telephone conference call designed to provide updates from the Department, briefing from the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, updates from other state agencies and address questions from partners. If you are interested in joining this weekly call, please see the call-in information below:

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 2:00pm-2:30pm

Call-In Number: 888-585-9008

Conference Room ID: 872-128-152

Additional Resources

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued their CDC Health Alert Network (HAN) Update which highlights guidance and recommendations for evaluating and identifying patients who should be tested for COVID-19 that was shared on March 4, 2020, on the CDC COVID-19 website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>. It supersedes the guidance and recommendations provided in CDC's HAN 428 distributed on February 28, 2020.

Health care practitioners should immediately implement recommended infection prevention and control practices (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>) if a patient is suspected of having COVID-19.

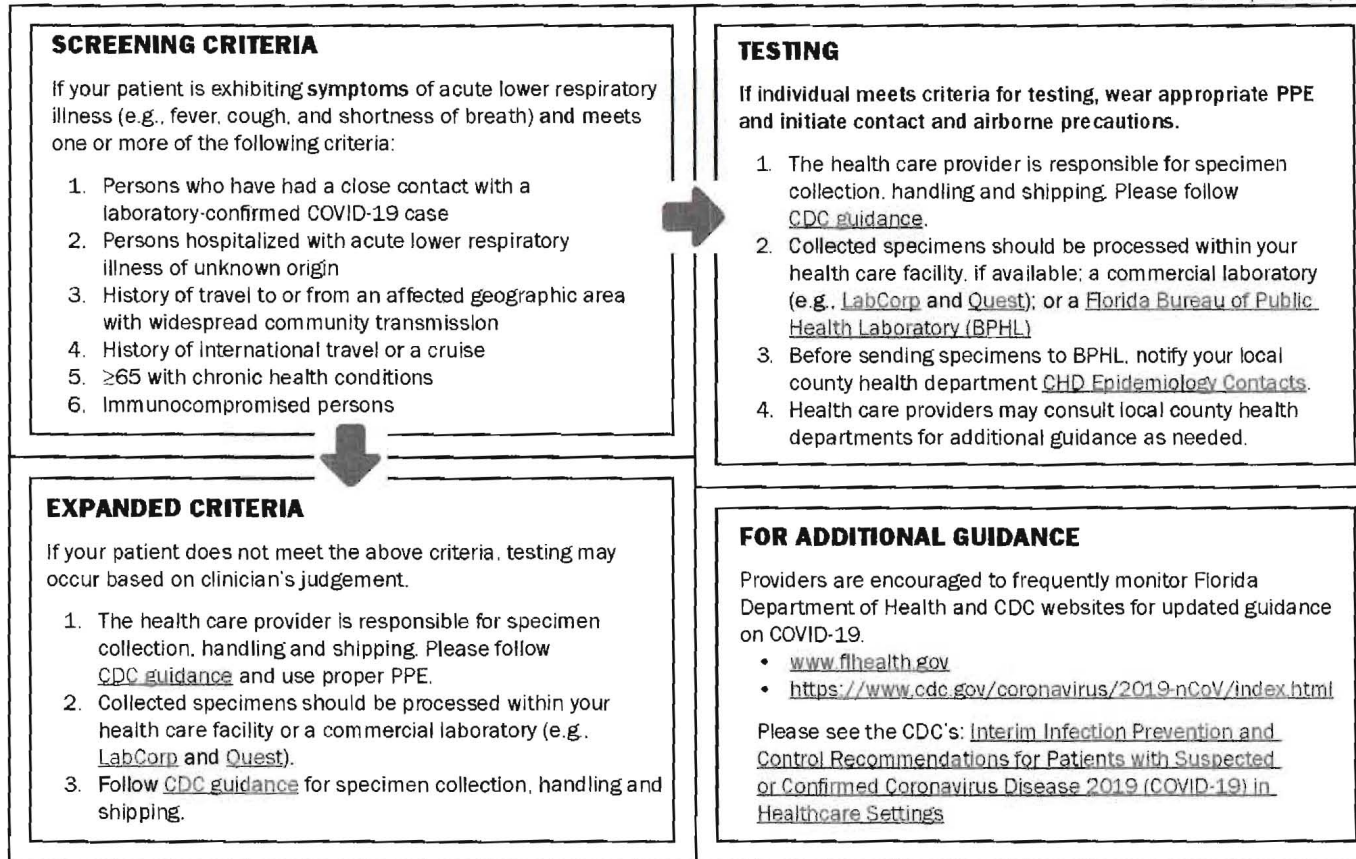
The American Medical Association has published a Physician's Guide to COVID-19 that includes how to prepare your practice, protect yourself from infection and diagnosing patients with suspected or confirmed COVID- 19 (<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/physicians-guide-covid-19>).



Clinical Screening Tool for Identifying Persons Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Symptomatic individuals should be asked to wear a surgical mask upon arrival. Initiate contact and airborne precautions, using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Version 4.2 | March 15, 2020



Please click [here](#) for a print friendly version of the Clinician Screening Tool for Identifying Persons Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).