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**About the COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program**

Hawai‘i Health Partners (“HHP”) is an association of physicians and other health care providers throughout the State of Hawaii that includes independent physicians and those associated with Hawai‘i Pacific Health at Kapi‘olani Medical Center for Women & Children, Straub Medical Center, Pali Momi Medical Center, and Wilcox Medical Center.

The HHP COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program works with your physician to help you through this illness with education, monitoring and support. We make use of the Epic electronic medical record system, a reporting app you can use on your phone, and regular phone conversations.

Our staff will show you how to report how you are doing daily on a smartphone app called Care Companion. If that doesn’t work for you, we will call you routinely to see how you’re doing. You can also call us at (808) 462-5430 [option 5]. We will keep your Primary Care Physician informed of all developments. Of course you can also call them any time.

**About COVID-19**

**What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is the name of an illness caused by a type of germ called a “virus.” You may hear this virus called the “coronavirus” or “SARS-CoV-2.”

This particular virus is very contagious. This means it is easily spread from one person to others.

When you catch this virus, you might not know that you are sick for four or five days. In fact, your illness may be so mild that you never feel sick at all.

However, you can still give this illness to lots of other people even when you feel well. Every time you talk, or laugh, or sneeze, or cough you could send billions of tiny drops into the air, drops that are full of contagious virus creatures.

These drops could infect other people when they are near you, sometimes even if they are wearing masks. Drops can get onto objects that can infect people when they touch them.

This is why even people who do not think they are sick should wear masks when they are not alone or with members of their household. Masks keep most of the drops from getting into the air, and since anyone could be sick without knowing it, we all need to wear masks to keep our drops to ourselves.

Washing your hands a lot reduces the number of germs you leave behind you as you touch things, and the number that you pick up from other people.

**My COVID-19 test was positive. What do I do now?**

A positive nose swab test means you are infected with the virus. This virus is easy to catch and easy to spread.

* Anyone with a positive test is expected to isolate at home until the infection is cleared.
  + Most people can be cleared once 10 days have passed from the first sign of illness or the day the test was done (if no illness signs or symptoms).
    - To be cleared, you must be at least 10 days from the start, and must be fever free for at least 24 hours (without medicine to decrease your fever) and must be getting better (if there were any illness signs or symptoms).
  + Some people take longer to clear; these people may need help from their physician or other healthcare provider to decide when it is safe to be around others again.
* Anyone in close contact with someone who tested positive is expected to quarantine at home for 14 days.
* Close contact means within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes during the 48 hours before the infected person knew they were ill or any time during the 10 days after they knew they were ill.

Isolation at home and quarantine at home are very similar. Isolation works best if the infected person can be in their own room, with their own bathroom and eating by themselves. For a lot of households, this is really hard to do. If that is your situation, you must at least quarantine: no one should leave the house for any reason, except if you need to get urgent medical care (not routine check-ups, etc.) until your isolation is over or your quarantine is finished.

* If you can’t isolate the infected person at home, the quarantine for all of the contacts in the home is even longer. The infected person has to be cleared (so at least 10 days from the start of the infection), and then the other household contacts must be home for a 14 day quarantine, starting from that day. It might be 24 days (or even longer).
* In either situation, you may need to get food and other supplies. Don’t go out for that yourself. Ask for help to have food delivered. If you leave your home, you run the risk of giving this virus to others.
* Can I work when my test is positive? If you have to leave your home to work the answer is NO. If you are able to work from home, you can still do that.
* Should I exercise? Rest is good, but lying down all day is not. Move around in the areas of your home where you won’t come into contact with others and if you have a private outdoor space that is fine too.

**How do I know that I am no longer contagious? Should I get another test?**

Another test is not helpful. Many patients continue to have positive swab tests long after their illness is over. Studies show that these people are not contagious.

**What will this illness feel like? How sick will I be?**

Most people with this illness are not very ill, or may not even know they have it. The problem is they can pass it to others who could become very ill from it.

* Some people have fever, many don’t.
* Some people have sore throat, cough, chest pain or difficulty breathing.
* Some people realize they can’t smell or taste anything.
* Some people have a bad headache, or confusion or become dizzy.
* Some people have stomach upset: vomiting and diarrhea.
* Some people have all of these things happen to them.

We can’t tell who will get really sick and need to be in the hospital and who will breeze through this.

We do know that some people are more likely to become more ill: the elderly, people with diabetes or bad lung disease, people who are really overweight and people who smoke or vape have all been found to be more likely to have trouble with a COVID-19 infection.

We do know that mild illness in the beginning can become more severe as days go by, so you’ll want to make sure that your physician (or our program) knows how you are doing through your illness until your infection is cleared.

**What can I do to protect my family and community?**

* Stay home. Do not work or go outside until you are cleared. This is called “self-isolation.”
* Stay away from others in your family. Use a separate bathroom (if possible). Wear a mask when closer than 6 feet to others. Additional guidance for close quarters and share housing is available here:
  + Living in shared housing: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/shared-housing/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/shared-housing/index.html)
  + Living in close quarters: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/living-in-close-quarters.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/living-in-close-quarters.html)
* Maximize the ventilation in your home. The more breeze moving through, the fewer infectious droplets hanging around in the air.
* Wash your hands often. Use hand sanitizer. Keep your hands away from your face.
* Use disinfectant on surfaces that could be contaminated.
* Eat meals alone.
* If you have to go to a medical facility, do not take public transportation. Use remote patient care options (telephone or video with your physician) when possible.

**I am a household contact, not the person with a positive test. What do I need to know?**

* You will want to try to limit contact with the infected person as much as possible.
* Wear a mask if you are not able to keep at least 6 feet apart from them. Have the infected person wear a mask too, if they are able.
* Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer after you touch the infected person (if you can’t avoid touching).
* Clean door knobs, refrigerator handles, the TV remote, bathroom surfaces and other surfaces that the infected person has touched.
* Eat your meals at different times and keep your distance from the infected person when they are eating.

If you can really be separated from the infected person in your household, you may be able to end your quarantine in 14 days. If you are not able to be separated, your 14-day quarantine doesn’t start until the infected person is cleared.

Many people want to be tested themselves to see if they have the COVID-19 infection too.

If you want to be tested, it is ok to leave the house for that to go to a drive-up testing site.

Do not just show up: you need to make sure it is all arranged so you won’t expose others.

Do not go anywhere else on your way to and from testing (you are in quarantine and so should be at home).

It is often best to wait a few days to get your test done. If it is done too soon, the result may be negative, even if you are incubating the virus. Even if your test is negative, you still need to be home for the full number of quarantine days.

If your test is positive, look at all of the information above about what to do when your test is positive.

**Taking Care of Yourself**

While we have some medications to give people who are really sick in hospital which seem to help, at this time there is no cure. Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. Self-isolation can increase stress and anxiety. We’ve included a helpful handout “Coping with COVID-19: Isolation and Quarantine” to help make this time less stressful.

**Medications**

Medications that you are used to for things that may be uncomfortable for you are fine: medicine like Tylenol or Advil for fever or headache, cough medicine, throat lozenges, and over the counter medicines for diarrhea are generally fine.

*Cough:* Honey can help. Robitussin DM (with dextromethorphan) can help. Your personal physician can prescribe benzonatate or codeine if you need something stronger. Airborne, Emergency, and Rescue will not help.

*Fever:*  A temperature of 103.0° F is not harmful and does not require treatment. Following a temperature over the course of an illness can be helpful in deciding if the illness is getting better or worse. You can take Tylenol 500 mg (so-called Extra Strength) - generic name acetaminophen - up to six pills a day for aches and pains and fever, but this can make interpretation of your temperature harder for physicians. If you choose to lower a fever with Tylenol, then be sure to record it along with your log of temperatures, blood pressures and oxygen levels. You will need to drink more water when you have a fever. Drink enough to make your urine look clear.

*Sore Throat:*  Gargle with warm salt water. Avoid alcohol-based mouth washes like Scope or Listerine. Suck on cough drops. These are really just candy, but can make your throat feel better.

*Nose Symptoms:* We like spicy soups and ginger teas. Salt water nose sprays (Ocean Spray and many others) and cortisone sprays (Flonase, Nasonex) can help. Many people take over the counter cold pills with antihistamine and decongestants. These can make you sleepy or keep you awake and may not make you feel better overall. Unfortunately, the return of normal sense of smell may take a long time.

*Diarrhea:*  If you need it to slow down frequent, loose stools, use loperamide (Imodium AD). No prescription needed. Instructions on the box. Cutting down on concentrated sugars and milk products is advised. Gatorade and other “sports” drinks should be avoided. They have too much sugar and can make diarrhea worse.

*Fatigue and body aches:*  Rest. Wait.

*Headache:* Tylenol as above. People without kidney disease or ulcers may prefer Advil (ibuprofen) up to six a day or Aleve (naproxen) up to three a day taken after food.

*Chest pain:* If you cough long enough, your rib cage muscles will get sore, and hurt when you cough. This is not dangerous and should be tolerated like all the other annoying symptoms above. However, if you get abrupt, severe chest pain when you breathe (often with difficulty breathing) you should seek attention immediately.

*Dropping Oxygen Levels:* Call in if your oxygen levels are consistently falling below 94%, even if you feel fine.

*Asthma, COPD, and other pre-existing lung problems:*  Continue your usual medications, but do not use desk-top nebulizers. These can generate a lot of contagious drops in the air. Use your hand-held inhalers instead, and in the privacy of your own room.

If you take prescription medicines and aren’t sure what to do, check in with your provider about that.

Your Primary Care Physician will advise you about how to adjust your usual medicines through the course of your COVID-19 illness. If you take blood pressure pills, be sure to check your pressure standing up daily. Being sick and not eating well can make your pressure lower. If the top number is under 100, then we advise skipping blood pressure pills until you have discussed this with your physician.

Likewise, being sick can make diabetes harder to control. Like blood pressure, readings that are too low are more of an immediate problem than numbers that are too high. Glucose readings under 100 might require a reduction in amount of diabetes medicine. Juice or sugary foods can bring low blood sugars up quickly, but only temporarily.

**What will I need to take care of myself at home?**

There are some tools that may be helpful to have at home as you go through this.

Don’t go to the store to buy these, and household contacts who are in quarantine should also not go out to get them. Ask for help if you’d like to get these items (or maybe order online to have them mailed to you if you can get them within a few days).

* Thermometer: Knowing if you have a fever, and how high your temperature is, is information that may be useful.
* Blood pressure cuff: It may be useful to know if your blood pressure is staying in the normal range. Some people experience big changes in their blood pressure during COVID-19 illness, and those changes may be important.
* Pulse Oximeter: This is a device to help measure the amount of oxygen in your blood. COVID-19 can cause the amount of oxygen getting in to your blood to drop, and this is one of the reasons people go into the hospital for care.

If you cannot afford to buy this equipment, then let us know. We may be able to help you, so contact us.

Remember, we have a program to help guide you through this: the **COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program**.

We also recommend that you use Hawai‘i Pacific Health’s online patient portal, MyChart, so you can communicate with my Primary Care Physician more easily. If you do not yet have access to MyChart call your Hawai‘i Pacific Health physician’s office. They will give you instructions, a MyChart Activation Code and your Medical Record Number.

If you are having difficulty activating MyChart, please contact the MyChart support line at

535-7725 (Oahu), 246-1663 (Kauai) or 1-877-228-1894.

**How can I tell when I need medical attention?**

* If your pulse ox drops to 94% or below and stays there, it is time to call your Primary Care Physician.
  + Your oxygen meter should be reading 95% or above when you stand up and take a deep breath.
* If you are having more trouble breathing, even with a normal oxygen level.
* If your temperature is up to 104.0° F.
* If your systolic blood pressure (the top number) is under 100.
* If your heart rate (pulse) is over 110.
* If your lips and fingers turn blue. This could mean your oxygen is under 90%.
* If you have fainting or confusion.
* If you have sudden pain in your chest or cough up blood.

**Who can I contact for medical attention?**

The following clinical resources can evaluate, and/or treat over the phone to help you decide if you should call 911, go to the emergency room or if visiting COVID-19 Respiratory Evaluation Clinic is the right next step.

* Your Primary Care Physician
* COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program, (808) 462-5430 [option 5]
* HPH Virtual Urgent Care ((808) 462-5430 [option 4], open daily 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Of course, calling an ambulance by **dialing 911** is always there as the last resort.

**I am feeling really stressed about all this. Is there a counsellor that I can talk to who might help me through it?**

We can help connect you with counsellors throughout the Hawai‘i Health Partners network.

You can also contact **Hawai‘i CARES (Coordinated Access Resource Entry System)**.

This is a Hawai‘i State Department of Health service that can address your concerns. *Call (808) 832-3100 (Oahu) or 1-800-753-6879 for Neighbor Islands.* When you call [Hawai’i CARES](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/cares/#_blank), you will be connected with a local crisis counselor who will ask a bit about you, what your needs are, and how they can help.

We are also partnering with the **Health Personas** organization to provide phone support.

Their information is included in the package.

**Recovery**

**When will I be over this illness and can return to my usual life?**

Right now, COVID-19 is generally considered “resolved” when all three of these things are true:

1. It has been at least ten days since your first symptom (or positive test if you never had symptoms).
2. Your symptoms are gone or substantially better.
3. Your temperature has been below 100.4° F for at least one day without taking medications that lower it (Tylenol, acetaminophen, Advil, ibuprofen, Aleve, naproxen, etc.).

Confirm with your Primary Care Physician and/or COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program liaison before you end your self-isolation.

**Now that I am over COVID-19, am I immune? Can I get it again?**

Most experts think you are probably immune, at least for a while. There are some patients who appear to have been infected twice. You should act just as carefully as someone who never had COVID-19.

**About Convalescent COVID-19 Plasma**

“Because your immune system fought off COVID-19, you now have antibodies in you that could help others fight it off too.” - [thefightisinus.org](https://thefightisinus.org/en-us#home)

Please consider helping other critically ill COVID-19 patients by donating your convalescent plasma, which has neutralizing antibodies to the coronavirus. It is a safe, easy procedure that can help treat up to four patients.

Once you have recovered and are symptom free for 28 days, if you are interested in donating, please contact Blood Bank of Hawaii at [COVIDplasma@bbh.org](mailto:COVIDplasma@bbh.org) or call (808) 848-4706.

For more information on the donation eligibility and process, refer to the COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma handout in your care package.

**HELPFUL LINKS AND PHONE NUMBERS**

For more up to date information regarding COVID-19 please visit the following websites:

* Hawai‘i Pacific Health: [https://www.Hawai‘i pacifichealth.org/hph-COVID-19-updates/](https://www.hawaiipacifichealth.org/hph-covid-19-updates/)
* United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://2Fwww.cdc.gov)
* World Health Organization (WHO): [www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

Phone numbers for COVID-19 care are:

* Hawai‘i Pacific Health COVID-19 Virtual Clinic: (808) 462-5430 [option 4; for Kaua‘i - option 3]
* COVID-19 Population Health Virtual Care Team: (808) 462-5430 [option 5]