



Regional Emergency Medical Organization
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ADVISORY 2020-1

Re: COVID-19

Distribution: All EMS Providers, REMO Physicians

Date: March 11, 2020

Clinical features of COVID-19 include fever and/or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (cough or shortness of breath). These are the same as influenza which still remains widespread in our community.

All patients should be assessed from at least 6 feet away for fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath believed to be related to an infectious illness and / or any exposure to known COVID positive patients.

If any of these are present, the responder should immediately don an N95 or surgical mask and eye protection along with exam gloves. Have patient wear a surgical mask. Render care per existing protocols.

Minimize the number of responders making direct patient contact with someone with fever and/or signs of a respiratory illness. Where possible, reduce the entry of Law Enforcement or First Response Fire Departments to help minimize exposure. These recommendations may expand as the outbreak continues.

Minimize use of nebulized medications to these patients if possible, but if needed, make sure to wear a gown to minimize secondary exposure to aerosolized particles. Agencies may substitute albuterol administered by metered dose inhaler with a spacer for nebulized albuterol if they notify REMO.

Providers should continue to take an exposure and travel history in order to risk stratify. Communicate this history to Emergency Department staff prior to arrival. Exposure to people who are known to have COVID is particularly important. Having a high suspicion, early symptom recognition, minimizing exposure risk, wearing appropriate PPE, and sharing specific concerns with hospitals is key for provider and hospital safety.

Use of alcohol-based hand-sanitizer and/or hand washing after every patient interaction remains a critical means of reducing spread and staying healthy.

Decontamination of ambulances and surfaces after use is critical. Any product EPA approved for use for emerging viral pathogens or coronavirus is ideal. Additional options may be forthcoming.

At this time, the Health Department is requiring quarantine of personnel who have cared for a patient who confirmed or has a high likelihood of having COVID-19 where the patient was not wearing a mask and the providers were not wearing masks and eye protection. Having patients wear masks and wearing eye protection and a mask protects our personnel and maintains our workforce.

All EMS personnel should self-monitor and should not report to work if experiencing fever or respiratory symptoms (such as: cough, shortness of breath, sore throat).

General information and resources:

Here are a few tips to stay healthy:

If you are sick, stay home

Avoid close contact with people who are sick

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash – then wash your hands

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

If you have not yet, please get vaccinated for influenza

Clean hands frequently with soap and water (wash for at least 20 seconds)

When you can not wash your hands, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Minimize hand shaking

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

Stay hydrated and get plenty of rest

Consider changing your clothes prior to going home from a shift and wash all work-related clothing in hot water

Comprehensive guidance is available from the CDC at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/caring-for-patients.html>

(This information is updated almost daily)

New York State guidance is available at:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/providers.htm>

We are currently in a ‘state of heightened prevention’ – be clean, be careful, be safe.