
Purpose of this document:

The purpose of this document is to assist healthcare facilities in taking immediate actions to prepare for and manage the COVID-19 outbreak. Healthcare facilities should be proactive in preparing for a potential outbreak and implementing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within their facilities and to the community at large.

Actions to take now to prepare for an outbreak:

1. Establish a COVID-19 response team that includes cross-functional teams of facility staff and external experts.
2. Consider the development of hospital contingency plans. Identify alternate settings for care and the ways to safely reallocate clinical resources to meet the heightened needs of COVID-19 patients.
3. Develop a plan for community-based COVID-19 care and consider strategies to reduce unnecessary use of expensive acute care services.
4. Plan to ensure the availability of protective equipment and supplies for the healthcare workforce.
5. Plan for the provision of basic and primary healthcare services during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Key Points:

- The U.S. healthcare system must plan for the potential impact of COVID-19.
- Healthcare facilities should be proactive in preparing for community transmission of COVID-19.
- The primary goals of each healthcare facility is to ensure that patients receive safe and effective care, maintain healthcare system functioning, and mitigate the burden on the local public health system.

Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States:

The primary mode of transmission is via respiratory droplets from infected individuals. Other methods of transmission include direct contact with body fluids, fomites and airborne transmission.

Recommendations:

- Implement routine infection prevention and control practices in all healthcare settings.
- Increase the use of telehealth to reduce unnecessary in-person visits and hospitalizations.
- Establish a hospital contingency plan that includes strategies to quickly mobilize staff and minimize delays between patient assessments and actions.
- Establish a hospital communication plan to ensure effective and timely communication between healthcare providers, facility leadership, and external partners.
- Establish a system to rapidly report any potential COVID-19 cases.

Facilities may consider:

- Using alternate and separate areas in the emergency department, intensive care units, and other high-risk areas.
- Creating an area for spatially separating patients with respiratory symptoms.
- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff assessing and managing patients.
- Establishing a system for providing guidelines and information to patients and visitors.
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Source: