

## COVID-19 Response and Reactivation Update

### August 4: Symptom Screening, Cloth Mask Use, and Reimbursement for Self-Isolation Counseling

Today's issue features an update on on-site symptom screening and cloth face masks as well as information about the recent announcement from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding provider reimbursement for COVID-19 self-isolation counseling.

#### **SYMPTOM SCREENING FOR ON-SITE PHYSICIANS AND EMPLOYEES**

All physicians and employees reporting to work at an NM facility must complete symptom screening before starting work every day. In-person screening personnel are being reduced across the health system. Going forward, one employee screener will be at each entrance to read employee temperatures, allow quick access to those with a green "cleared to work" screen on their device, and direct employees to an open workstation if they have not completed their attestation ahead of time. With the reduction of screening staff, those relying on in-person screening should expect a delay in facility entry.

Remember, you have several options to facilitate screening:

- **Download the NM Symptom Check Application** for your Android or iPhone.
- Answer screening questions on your smartphone by visiting [nmsymptomcheck.nm.org](https://nmsymptomcheck.nm.org). This will result in a green or red response on your device, similar to the app.
- Access screening questions from a computer by visiting [nmsymptomcheck.nm.org](https://nmsymptomcheck.nm.org). For facilities with a lobby computer, tap your badge to display your results from the website.

By completing the symptom screening, you are attesting to the truthfulness of your responses. Any physician or employee who provides false information or who does not complete the daily screening when coming on-site will be subject to corrective action. Please note that patient and visitor screening policies remain unchanged.

#### **CLOTH MASKS TO BE PERMITTED IN ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS**

NM continues to require universal masking in all NM buildings for physicians, employees, patients and visitors. However, physicians and employees in administrative buildings will be permitted to use personal cloth or fabric masks as an alternative.

Guidelines for the use of masks are as follows:

- Individuals who work in an NM administrative building may use cloth or fabric masks.
- NM-provided masks are still required for all physicians and employees working in clinical buildings, and for all patients and visitors in clinical spaces.
- Everyone is required to wear an NM-issued, medical-grade mask when visiting any clinical building.
- NM-issued masks will continue to be provided for all physicians, employees, patients and visitors at all locations.

NM-issued, medical-grade face masks provide protection from infectious droplets. Cloth face masks do not, although they do restrict the spread of droplets and are likely to protect people around you if you are infectious. NM requires that all physicians and staff use medical-grade face masks in all facilities whenever appropriate physical distancing is not possible.

Masks must be worn in all shared spaces, including hallways, multi-stall bathrooms, breakrooms and elevators. A mask does not need to be worn in spaces where physical distancing can be maintained, such as in a private office and when eating in a designated area at least 6 feet away from others.

For more information about mask use, visit the [COVID-19 home page](#) on Physician Forum.

#### **CMS AND CDC ANNOUNCE PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT FOR COVID-19 COUNSELING**

On July 30, CMS and CDC announced that payment is available to physicians and healthcare providers to counsel patients, at the time of COVID-19 testing, about the importance of self-isolation after they are tested and prior to the onset of symptoms.

The transmission of COVID-19 occurs from individuals who are symptomatic, pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic. The spread of the virus can be reduced significantly by having patients isolate while waiting for test results or symptom onset. CDC models demonstrate that when individuals who are tested for the virus are separated from others and placed in quarantine, there can be up to an 86% reduction in the transmission of the virus, compared with a 40% decrease in viral transmission if the person isolates after symptoms arise.

At the time of COVID-19 testing, providers should counsel patients regarding the following:

- The immediate need for isolation, even before test results are available
- The importance of informing their immediate household and recent contacts that they, too, should be tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate
- The signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- The services available to support patients who are isolating at home

In addition, patients should be counseled that if they test positive:

- They need to wear a mask at all times
- Public health authorities will contact them to initiate contact tracing

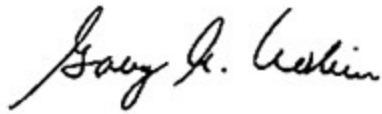
CMS will use existing evaluation and management (E/M) payment codes to reimburse providers who are eligible to bill for counseling services regardless of where the COVID-19 test is administered, including physicians' offices, Immediate Care Centers, hospitals, and community drive-thru or pharmacy testing sites.

Additional information and resource links are available in the [CMS Counseling Check List PDF](#).

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Please remember, if members of the media reach out to you for comment or an interview, per [NM's Media Relations Policy](#), please refer them to Media Relations at 312.926.7432.

Thank you to all NM physicians and clinicians for your ongoing commitment, collaboration and leadership in providing exceptional *Patients First* care during this unprecedented time.



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