

## COVID-19 Response and Reactivation Update

### July 23: Eye Protection, How to Advise on Proper Masking, NM Symptom Screening, Metra Free for Medical Personnel

*This twice-weekly communication is intended to facilitate the sharing of important clinical information about COVID-19 pandemic response and reactivation initiatives across Northwestern Medicine.*

Today's issue features information from Neuro-ophthalmologist and Ophthalmology Chair Nicholas Volpe, MD, on the importance of eye protection. It also provides talking points for advising a colleague or patient on proper masking, a reminder to install the NM Symptom Check app to expedite access to all NM facilities and an announcement from Metra that medical personnel can ride free through the month of August.

#### **EYE PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recently, the Chicago Department of Health issued a recommendation that healthcare workers wear eye protection at all times when caring for a patient, regardless of COVID-19 status. This is due to the potential viral transmission through contact of virus-containing droplets from respiratory secretions with the conjunctiva.

The eye is a well-established site of viral infections with other coronaviruses, such as HCoV-NL63, and more common viruses, such as adenovirus and herpes simplex virus. It is clear that SARS-CoV-2 has an affinity for mucosa, particularly the respiratory mucosa. But there is evidence that it also has some affinity for the conjunctiva, and the conjunctival epithelial cells have the necessary ACE2 receptor to allow infection.

In addition, up to one-third of patients with SARS-CoV-2 will have presentations that include conjunctivitis: eye redness, chemosis and tearing. Whether the ocular infection leads to systemic infection or systemic infections lead ultimately to patients having ocular manifestations — or both — is unclear. It is reasonable to assume that contact with infectious droplets and the ocular surface of healthcare workers, either through the patient coughing or sneezing droplets, or the healthcare worker touching their eyes, is a potential mechanism of spread for the illness. It is therefore recommended that healthcare workers wear eye protection in the form of a face shield (preferred), safety glasses or goggles when caring for patients.

#### **HOW TO ADVISE A COLLEAGUE, PATIENT OR VISITOR WHO DOESN'T MASK PROPERLY**

Have you passed an individual in a Northwestern Medicine building wearing a mask that has slipped below their nose, or is dangling around their neck? You know this is a safety concern, but do not want to create a conflict by confronting the individual.

For the safety of all patients, visitors, employees and physicians, everyone at Northwestern Medicine has a responsibility to suggest corrective action when someone is not properly wearing a mask. Use the below talking points the next time you need to offer a friendly reminder about proper mask usage. [Click here](#) for a printer-friendly version of these talking points.

**If the person's mask is on their face but not worn correctly, you can say:**

- Thank you for wearing a mask. Did you know our universal masking policy also covers how to wear it properly? If masks are not worn properly, they can pose a safety risk for you and others.
- I noticed your mask:
  - Has slipped off the bridge of your nose
  - Has slipped below your nose
  - Is sneaking up over your chin
  - Has become loose
- Can you wash your hands or use hand sanitizer, and then:
  - Pull the mask over the bridge of your nose and pinch it so it fits securely?
  - Pull the mask over your chin?
  - Fasten the mask more securely on both sides so there are no gaps?
- Thanks for your help to keep everyone here safe. Once you adjust your mask, don't forget to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer again.

**If the person's mask is not on their face, say:**

- Did you know masks must be worn at all times at Northwestern Medicine? If you are not wearing a mask on your face, it can pose a safety risk for you and others.
- Can you wash your hands or use hand sanitizer and then put your mask back on so it fits tightly and covers the bridge of your nose down to your chin?
- Thanks for your help to keep everyone here safe. Once you adjust your mask, don't forget to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer again.

**If you encounter resistance to your intervention:**

If a patient, visitor or staff member is resistant to your suggestions, do not continue the discussion, just walk away.

**Additional resources**

- [Detailed instructions on how to wear a mask](#)
- [Frequently asked questions about universal masking](#)

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

All physicians and employees reporting to work at a Northwestern Medicine facility must complete symptom screening before starting work every day. There are several options for completing the screening:

- [Download the NM Symptom Check Application](#) for your Android or iPhone.
- Access the screening questions from your smartphone via [nmsymptomcheck.nm.org](https://nmsymptomcheck.nm.org). This will result in a "Cleared for Work" on your device in a very similar fashion as the app.

- Access the screening questions from a computer by visiting [nmsymptomcheck.nm.org](https://nmsymptomcheck.nm.org). If your facility has a computer in the lobby, tap your badge to display your results from the website.
- In some locations, you may attest to the on-site screener at physician and employee entrances by tapping your badge and providing answers to the symptom questions. The number of available screeners at employee entrances will continue to decline, and those who choose this option may be delayed because of wait times.

If you exhibit a temperature of 100.0 degrees F or more and/or answer yes to any of the symptom questions:

- You will need to return home.
- You will receive an automated email informing you of next steps.
- Call 312.47.COVID (312.472.6843) for next steps and how to return to work.

Remember that 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 up to and including termination.

#### **Additional screening app news**

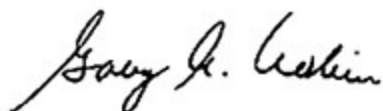
- In-person screeners are being significantly reduced. If you do not download the app or use [nmsymptomcheck.nm.org](https://nmsymptomcheck.nm.org) to self-screen, your entry into buildings could be delayed.
- The workforce now has the option to log in to the App using their NM ID or their last name and first two characters of their first name.
- When there is an update to the NM Workforce Application, users will be notified through the app that there is a new version they can download.

#### **METRA EXTENDS FREE RIDES FOR MEDICAL PERSONNEL**

**Metra announced Monday** that it will continue to allow doctors, nurses, EMTs, paramedics and other medical personnel on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic to ride free on Metra trains through the end of August. To ride free, medical personnel need to present a work ID showing they are employed at a hospital, doctor's office or medical facility to a Metra conductor.

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.



**Gary A. Noskin, MD**  
Senior Vice President, Quality  
Northwestern Memorial HealthCare



**Howard B. Chrisman, MD**  
Senior Vice President  
Northwestern Memorial HealthCare

Chief Medical Officer  
Northwestern Memorial Hospital

President  
Northwestern Medical Group