

COVID-19 Response and Reactivation Update

July 9: Chicago Travel Order, Universal Masking and New CMS Telephone Visit Documentation Requirement

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

Today's issue features information about the city of Chicago requiring all travelers from states with a recent spike in cases to quarantine for 14 days. Also, learn about new initiatives to help promote appropriate face mask use at all NM facilities and new guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for documenting time in telephone visits.

CITY OF CHICAGO REQUIRES SOME TRAVELERS TO QUARANTINE

NM employees and physicians are discouraged from traveling to areas of the U.S. where COVID-19 is prevalent. Effective July 6, the City of Chicago has enacted an emergency travel order requiring travelers from identified states experiencing a surge in new COVID-19 cases to quarantine for 14 days. This order includes visitors as well as anyone who lives or works within the city of Chicago who may have traveled out of state. All NM employees who are affected by this order are expected to observe the quarantine. However, if you test negative for COVID-19 on days 5 -7 after returning from an identified state, you may be able to return to work sooner than 14 days. Please call the NM COVID-19 Hotline 312.47.COVID (312.472.6843) to discuss options.

The list of states will be evaluated and updated every Tuesday. [View a list of states](#) included in the order. For more information about NM employee travel and return-to-work process, view [FAQs](#).

UNIVERSAL MASKING AT NM

In order to continue to provide a safe environment, NM requires all employees, physicians, patients and visitors to wear NM-issued face masks. Wearing a face mask has proven to be an effective public health measure to limit COVID-19 exposure and transmission.

Remember these important tips:

1. The mask must be pulled up to the bridge of your nose and down under your chin.

2. Do not wear your mask too loosely. The more that your breath can escape the mask, the less useful the mask.
3. Do not touch or adjust your mask frequently. Touching your mask can contaminate it with your hands. If you need to adjust your mask, wash your hands thoroughly before and after you touch it.

To reinforce the importance of **universal masking**, we have deployed visible lobby ambassadors at public entrances and in high-traffic areas to encourage proper face mask usage and to promote physical distancing. In addition, we are in the process of identifying “mask champions” across the system who will receive special training to assist with NM’s COVID-19 response.

In addition to universal masking, the latest regulatory guidelines require that **all** clinical caregivers wear NM-issued eye protection (goggles or face shield), in addition to face masks and other PPE, when caring for patients who are not masked. For additional details on appropriate PPE, please refer to the PPE Guidelines on the PPE Resources pages of **Physician Forum** or **NM Interactive**.

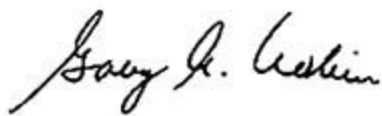
CMS TELEPHONE VISIT DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

The CMS has published further guidance on their documentation requirements for telehealth visits during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The CMS continues to strongly recommend video visits. For telephone visits, the CMS now requires documentation of the time spent in medical discussion with the patient as well as the time spent before and after the service in order to complete the visit.

This time documentation requirement is in addition to the existing back-end automation that converts in-office evaluation and management (E&M) codes to telephone codes for patients with Medicare, Humana, and Medicare Advantage insurance plans. Epic has been updated with fields to document the type of visit (video or telephone) and time spent for telephone visits. Epic will also give a prompt when a telehealth encounter is closed if these fields have not been documented. Visit Telehealth Resources on **Physician Forum** or **NMI** for more information.

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 support, collaboration and dedication to providing exceptional care during this pandemic.



Gary A. Noskin, MD
Senior Vice President, Quality
Northwestern Memorial HealthCare
Chief Medical Officer
Northwestern Memorial Hospital



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