

New COVID-19 Testing Plan for Clinical Center Inpatient Admissions

Patient Fact Sheet

This document is to share information about our new COVID-19 testing process for inpatients. We appreciate your patience, understanding, and partnership as we take these steps. Our number one priority is protecting your health and safety, as well that of your NIH healthcare providers.

- Effective Tuesday, May 19, 2020, all patients who are scheduled for an inpatient admission to the Clinical Center will be tested for COVID-19. Inpatients are those patients whose care in the Clinical Center involves an overnight stay.
- In order to provide the most protection to all patients, visitors, and Clinical Center staff, it is very important every inpatient and rooming in visitor be tested. If, for any reason, you feel strongly that you should not be tested, please inform your primary NIH medical team. Your request for exemption will be reviewed by the Patient Representative. The request must then be approved by the CC CEO.
- The COVID-19 test involves a swab of one nostril to collect a sample. The collection takes about 15-20 seconds and can be slightly uncomfortable. Results will be available in 24 to 36 hours.
- The admission COVID19 test is mandatory. The Clinical Center will not admit an inpatient who refuses testing for COVID-19 unless an exemption has been approved.
- Currently anyone entering the Clinical Center is asked a series of questions, (known as “screening”) to see if he or she has symptoms that could be related to COVID-19. Screening is separate from testing.
- An inpatient who screens negative (i.e., does not report symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening) will proceed to his/her scheduled patient care unit where he or she will complete the admissions process. A trained nurse will then administer the COVID-19 test inside the patient’s room as part of the admissions process. Each patient will be expected to remain in his/her room until the results become available, unless otherwise directed by Clinical Center staff.

- An inpatient who upon arrival screens positive (i.e., reports symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening) will be escorted directly to a separate dedicated space for more assessment and COVID-19 testing. In other words, the test may happen prior to the admissions process. The patient will remain in this location until results become available.
- All inpatient visitors who have been approved to “room in” will be required to be tested for COVID-19. A visitor who refuses to be tested for COVID-19 will not be approved to “room in” The visitor will be screened and, if negative, will be allowed to enter the Clinical Center. The visitor will then be tested inside the patient’s room and will be required to remain there until the test results become available.

Other Safeguards to Note

As part of our commitment to protecting the health and safety of our patients, visitors, and staff, the Clinical Center also continues to conduct many infection control measures, including:

- Daily screening of every patient, visitor and staff who enter the CC.
- Masking: each patient, visitor and staff member receives a mask at entry to Building 10 that the individual is expected to wear when around others.
- Patients and their rooming-in visitors are asked to wear their face mask whenever a healthcare staff member enters the room.
- Social distancing: each patient, visitor and staff member (not directly involved in hands-on patient care) is generally expected to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet from other individuals.

FAQs for Inpatients

I’m scheduled to be an inpatient at the Clinical Center. What happens if I screen positive for COVID-19 as I enter the Clinical Center?

If you screen positive (i.e., reports symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening), our staff will escort you to a dedicated, specially designed area of the hospital for further assessment and testing.

What happens if my visitor screens positive for COVID-19?

Any visitor who screens positive (i.e., reports symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening) will not be allowed to enter the Clinical Center. The ONLY exception is if the visitor is the adult caregiver of a pediatric (i.e., child) patient – and both the adult caregiver and the pediatric patient arrived at the Clinical Center together. In that instance, both the adult caregiver and the pediatric patient will be escorted to the dedicated, specially designed area of the hospital for further assessment.

What if I refuse COVID-19 testing?

The Clinical Center will not admit any inpatient who refuses to be tested for COVID-19 unless an exemption has been approved.

What if my visitor who plans to room in with me refuses to be tested for COVID-19?

If a visitor refuses COVID-19 testing, he or she will not be allowed to “room in”.

What happens if my COVID-19 test is positive?

If you have a positive test for COVID-19, we will talk to you about the infection and your options for care. This test result will also be available with your other medical records on the Patient Portal.

What happens if my visitor has a positive test result?

A visitor with a positive COVID-19 test result will be given a mask and discharged from the Clinical Center. The visitor will be instructed to contact their primary care physician and will be given CDC resource material for managing COVID-19 infection.

What about outpatients and their visitors?

Outpatients and their visitors who screen negative (i.e., does not report symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening) will not be tested. If an outpatient screens positive, the outpatient will be escorted to a dedicated, specially designed area for further assessment. If a visitor to an outpatient screens positive (i.e., reports symptoms of COVID-19 during entry screening), the visitor will not be allowed in the Clinical Center, unless they arrive with a pediatric patient (at which case additional safeguards will be taken).

What about parents/caregivers of pediatric patients?

Parents/Caregivers of pediatric inpatients will be tested for COVID-19.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Please contact your primary NIH medical team if you have more questions about COVID-19.