



# FAQs for Transplant and Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Last updated on 4/21/20

Whether you're in the process of being evaluated for a transplant, awaiting transplantation, or have received an organ transplant, we understand you may have questions and concerns about the Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19. Although current data on COVID-19 and transplantation is limited, this FAQs document is designed to answer some common questions that you may have. If you have further concerns or require more detailed information, please contact the transplant team.

MedStar Health has also provided extensive information on COVID-19, including state guidelines, Hospital policies such as patient visitation, the COVID-19 screening process, answers to common questions, and other resources. Please see MedStar COVID-19 Information at [MedStar COVID-19 Information](#).

## MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute Important Contact Information

**MedStar Georgetown**  
3800 Reservoir Rd., NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
**202-444-3700**

**MedStar Fairfax**  
3301 Woodburn Rd.  
Suite 209  
Annandale, VA 22003  
**703-698-9254**

**MedStar Washington Hospital  
Center**  
110 Irving St., NW  
Washington, DC 20010  
**202-877-6389**

For all locations after 5 p.m., weekends, and holidays: **202-444-3700**

**COVID-19 Testing:  
Washington, D.C.**  
**MedStar Health Urgent Care**  
228 7th St., SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
**202-698-0795**

**MedStar Health Urgent Care**  
1805 Columbia Rd., NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
**202-797-4960**

**COVID-19 Testing near Fairfax, Va.**  
**MedStar Prompt Care**  
3610 D King St.  
Alexandria, VA 22302  
**703-845-2815**

Here is an extensive list of other MedStar Prompt Care Centers available for evaluation and COVID-19 testing outside of the D.C. and northern Virginia areas: [MedStarHealth.org/MHS/Urgent-care/](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/MHS/Urgent-care/)



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Are people who've had a transplant at a greater risk of getting COVID-19?**

**A:** There is no specific data or published information associating transplant patients with a higher risk of being infected with COVID-19. However, because transplant recipients are on immunosuppression and historically have a higher incidence of specific viral infections, [the CDC does classify immunosuppressed transplant patients at higher risk](#). For that reason, transplant patients should take all necessary precautions, such as social distancing, and wearing a mask, at this time. If a transplant patient is concerned that they may have symptoms of COVID-19, such as cough, runny nose, or fever, they should contact the transplant team.

**Please remember it is critical for patients to communicate with the transplant team, to take their medications, and have their labs drawn as requested.**

### **Q: Are people who were living kidney donors at increased risk of getting COVID-19?**

**A:** There is no specific data to answer this question, but the risk for a living kidney donor is likely similar to that of the general public. Donors should follow the CDC-recommended precautions including social distancing, wearing a mask, and frequent handwashing. If a living kidney donor requires medical treatment, any medications used should be dosed according to their kidney function. Kidney function should be closely monitored during the treatment course.

### **Q: What are symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A:** COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Many people who are infected are asymptomatic carriers. That means that while they do not get sick or have symptoms, they can still infect others.

Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and difficulty breathing. Patients tend to describe a flu-like or viral upper respiratory infection. The severity of symptoms can range from mild, where the patient can self-quarantine and stay at home, to significant illness requiring hospitalization. The [CDC](#) has information about symptoms, when to see the doctor, and testing for COVID-19.

### **Q: What should I do to protect myself and others from COVID-19?**

**A:** Follow the precautions that the [CDC recommends](#) for the general population to protect yourself and protect others, including:

- Wear a face mask in public.
- Avoid touching your face.
- [Wash your hands often](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you can't wash your hands and are using hand sanitizer, it must contain at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick and [practice social distancing](#) (staying six feet apart from others).

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, and wash your hands immediately afterward.
- Regularly disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.
- Avoid non-essential travel.

### **Q: What should I do if I'm exposed to someone with or who has symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A:** The [CDC](#) has specific recommendations if you are sick, exposed, or live with someone who might be infected.

We are actively screening calls for those concerned about COVID-19. If you have been exposed or have symptoms, isolate yourself and contact your transplant coordinator to find out how your specific situation will be handled. We will help direct you to the appropriate MedStar Health facility for testing.

**If you are experiencing severe symptoms, such as severe shortness of breath, call 911. Please do not show up at the healthcare facility without contacting the transplant team so that we can take appropriate precautions to limit the spread of the infection.**

If you are asked to come to the clinic and there is a concern about exposure or infection, we will place you in a special room for quarantine and the transplant team will take appropriate steps to evaluate and manage your situation.

You can also contact the transplant clinic through the [patient portal](#), where you can send messages to your provider and keep track of your health information. We will reply to your message as promptly as possible. If you need assistance with the patient portal, please contact myMedStar support toll-free at **1-877-745-5656** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Q: How is COVID-19 testing performed?**

**A:** A sample is collected from the back of the throat with a thin swab. The swab is inserted through the nose for several seconds. At this time, you must have an order from a healthcare provider to be tested.

### **Q: How long does it take to receive test results?**

**A:** This is an ongoing, evolving process. [Please click on the following link](#) to see how long it will take to receive the results from a MedStar Health Urgent Care Facility. If you are a transplant patient, you will be prioritized and the testing results could take only a few hours. During the time you are waiting for the test results, you should stay at home and isolate yourself from others as much as possible. The CDC has more information about [what to do after you are tested](#).

### **Q: What should I do about my transplant labs?**

**A:** Discuss with the transplant team how you should handle any needed lab work. If you are able to go to a local laboratory facility, please go two to three days before your scheduled appointment.

**Q: What should I do about my medications?**

**A:** First, confirm your pharmacy's hours and availability. If you get your medications through a mail-order pharmacy, contact the pharmacy and confirm that they will continue to deliver your medications. Try to have a backup supply of at least a month's worth of your medications if possible.

**Q: Are there medications I can take to lower my risk of getting COVID-19?**

**A:** At the current time, there are no medications with established data showing they are safe and effective that you can take to lower your risk. If you have questions, contact the transplant team.

**Q: What should I do if I was in the process of being evaluated for a transplant or am on the waitlist and scheduled to come for evaluation?**

**A:** We are transitioning to telehealth visits (via Zoom) for potential and waitlisted transplant recipients who need evaluations. If you are scheduled for an upcoming evaluation or waitlist appointment, you will be notified if your visit will be conducted via telehealth or at the clinic. If you are not contacted by us 48 hours before your visit, please call **202-444-3700**.

**Q: What if I want to be evaluated to be a Living Donor?**

**A:** Living donor evaluations are being done by telehealth visits via Zoom. The potential donor is provided with their appointment information and can contact the virtual coordinator for any technical issues. For those interested in being a living kidney or liver donor we are still actively screening patient with the [online questionnaire](#). If a potential living donor or someone who has previously donated has a question, they can call **202-444-3700** and request to speak to a member of the living donor team.

**Q: Will the timing of my transplant change? Is MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute still performing living donor transplants?**

**A:** Currently, we are continuing with kidney, pancreas, small bowel, and liver transplants. Each patient's case is reviewed on an individual basis prior to making a decision on transplantation.

All potential deceased donors are screened for COVID-19. Living donor transplantation is being done on a case-by-case basis. For further information contact your pre-transplant coordinator.

**Q: What if I get called in for a transplant?**

**A:** The on-call coordinator will screen you and update you on the current testing process for COVID-19. If you are tested, results will be available in less than 2 hours.

**Q: How are outpatient appointments being handled?**

**A:** Discuss with your pre-transplant or post-transplant coordinator to find out if you can switch from in-person visits to telehealth (via phone or computer) visits. We are actively looking at our clinic schedules and switching patients we feel are appropriate for telehealth visits.

**MedStar Health has adjusted the [patient visitation policy](#) to decrease the spread of the virus.**

Please review the official MedStar [patient visitor policy](#) and be respectful of [social distancing](#). Anyone entering the hospital must wear a mask at all times. If they do not have a mask they will be given one upon entering the hospital.

**Please contact our appointment line if you wish to switch from in-person visits to telehealth visits:****MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute:****202-444-3700****MedStar Washington Hospital Center: 202-877-6389****Q: What are the requirements for using telehealth for virtual visits with the transplant team?**

- A:**
1. Download the Zoom app on your smartphone or a computer with camera access.
  2. Confirm your email address so that we can send you a link to log in to the Zoom session.
  3. Confirm the best number to call you prior to the visit to confirm the appointment.
  4. Check your blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and weight (if possible) on the morning of your telehealth visit and have that information available when we see you.

**Additional Resources:**

Here is a list of clickable links to additional resources:

**For patients:**

- [Video: Understanding COVID-19 and How to Stay Safe](#)
- [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [American Society of Transplantation Transplantation FAQs for Patients](#)
- [The National Kidney Foundation \(NKF\)](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

**For transplant professionals:**

- [The American Society of Nephrology](#)
- [American Society of Transplantation FAQs for Professionals](#)
- [The Transplantation Society](#)

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