U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pittsburgh VA Implements More Measures to Prevent COVID-19 Infection

As per guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) is taking special precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As part of this process, everyone who enters all VAPHS facilities are being screened for COVID-19 symptoms or potential exposure. This may lengthen entry times, so patients are advised to allow for that when arriving for their appointments.

The screening consists of three questions:
1. Do you have a fever or worsening cough or shortness of breath or flu-like symptoms?
2. Have you or a close contact traveled to an area with widespread or sustained community transmission of COVID-19 within 14 days of symptom onset?
3. Have you been in close contact with someone, including health care workers, confirmed to have COVID-19?

Per CDC guidance and VA protocols, screened individuals found to be at risk for COVID-19 infection are immediately isolated to prevent potential spread to others. We may verify their temperature on the spot. Critically ill persons will be immediately transferred to the emergency department for further evaluation. Persons who are stable and ambulatory will be sent home with printed instructions to isolate themselves and contact their primary care provider as soon as possible for further evaluation.

Veterans and staff are encouraged to take everyday preventive actions to avoid being exposed to the virus:
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick or becoming sick.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- If you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with symptoms, call the VA before going to the facility. Call your Patient Aligned Care Team during normal business hours or the VA Nurse Triage line at 412-360-6000 and press 3 to speak to a nurse.

Only Veterans who are gravely ill, in hospice or palliative care, or receiving a transplant may receive one visitor (family members or designated caregivers) at a time. No visitors under age 18 are permitted, unless arrangements are made with the Veteran's care team.

If you have an outpatient appointment, only one person may accompany you.

If additional inpatient visitors or outpatient escorts present to the facility, they will not be allowed in the building. No visitors will be allowed to wait in common areas.

No visitors are permitted at the H.J. Heinz III Veterans Recovery Center.

We have also temporarily paused large group activities and off-site trips for long-term care residents. Religious services at both campus chapels have been paused.

Volunteer support has been temporarily paused at both campuses, with the exception of DAV drivers bringing patients for appointments.

Effective March 17, Adult Day Health Care on our H.J. Heinz III campus is temporarily closed.

All Veterans with appointments or scheduled surgery are advised to call before traveling to the medical center. They can reach primary care at 412-822-3000 or surgery at 412-360-6700. Some outpatient appointments and procedures may be canceled.

Veterans experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath, should call 412-360-6000 and select option 3 to speak to a nurse before visiting the facility.

Veterans can also use virtual care options such as Telehealth or MyHealtheVet Secure Messaging.

More information for Veterans is here: https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/72615/vas-recommendations-help-slow-covid-19-virus/

For more information about the Coronavirus, please visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

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About VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) is one of the largest and most progressive VA health care systems in the nation. More than 4,000 employees serve nearly 80,000 veterans every year, providing a range of services from complex transplant medicine to routine primary care. VAPHS is a leader in virtual care delivery through telehealth technology; a center of research and learning with 116 research investigators and $17 million in funding; and a provider of state-of-the-art health care training to some 1,500 student trainees annually. VAPHS provides care at medical centers in Oakland and O'Hara Township in Pennsylvania and five outpatient clinics in Belmont County, Ohio, and Beaver, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania. Veterans can call 412-360-6993 to check eligibility or enrollment. Stay up to date at pittsburgh.va.gov and facebook.com/vaphs