



**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 Veterans' Hospitals Implement Measures to Protect Veterans and Staff from COVID-19**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal agencies to monitor and respond to the current outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States.

VA has a comprehensive plan in place to protect the health of everyone who visits or works at one of our facilities.

All VA medical facilities, including VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's two Pittsburgh campuses and five outpatient clinics, have implemented screening measures for signs of respiratory illness and exposure to COVID-19. Via telehealth services, we can provide a first line of defense using virtual screening for symptoms or exposure. Onsite, we are using standardized screening questions at appointment check in and during initial clinical screening.

Our goal is to prevent COVID-19 infections from spreading within VA while maintaining our usual high level of care for all Veterans.

While we have not identified any Veterans, employees, or visitors with COVID-19, out of an abundance of caution for our elderly and vulnerable long-term care patients, we recently limited visitations to the Community Living Center (CLC) at our H.J. Heinz III campus.

All visitors, employees, etc. must now enter through building 71, the ambulatory care center. As circumstances permit, we may also allow entry through building 50 at times. All entrants will be screened for fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Those who screen positive will not be granted access to the CLC.

The following groups of people should NOT visit patients:

- Persons with a fever or cough
- Persons who are feeling sick
- Children and adolescents under the age of 16

Visitors are limited to immediate family members or designated caregivers. All visitors are reminded to wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after visitation. Exceptions may be made for visitors of patients who are in critical condition or in end-of-life situations on a case-by-case basis. Additional policies restricting visitors may be put in place.

While we have also temporarily paused large group activities and offsite trips for CLC residents, our staff is working hard to bring activities and entertainment to each CLC unit.

Veterans coming into VAPHS facilities for outpatient care are being asked to call first when they have symptoms of a cold or flu. Veterans with confirmed symptoms may be instructed to come to a VA facility for additional triage or may be asked to remain at home with VA providing virtual follow-up, if appropriate.

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 who have traveled to a foreign country in the last 14 days or have direct contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19, should also call 412-360-6000 and press 3 BEFORE coming to the medical center or community clinic, even if symptoms are not present. Veterans with a premium account can also use My HealtheVet's secure messaging feature to contact their care team.

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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](http://pittsburgh.va.gov) and [facebook.com/vaphs](https://facebook.com/vaphs)