

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2020

VA announces safeguards to protect nursing home and spinal cord injury patients

WASHINGTON – While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) still considers COVID-19 to be a low threat to the general American public, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, March 10, new safeguards aimed at limiting COVID-19 exposure risk for two of its most susceptible patient populations: nursing home residents and spinal-cord injury patients.

VA's [134 nursing homes](#) are home to more than 41,000 Veterans across the country annually. The residents are predominantly older, and many have multiple complex health conditions, making them particularly vulnerable to infection. To minimize the risk of exposure, effective March 10 and until further notice, VA is taking the following actions:

- All VA nursing homes will adopt a “No Visitor” stance, meaning no outside visitors will be permitted to see residents.
 - The only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life on hospice units.
 - In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran’s room only.
- All VA nursing homes will suspend new admissions.
 - VA nursing homes will continue to welcome resident transfers from VA facilities once medical personnel have determined patients are not at risk for infection from COVID-19 or transmitting COVID-19.
- Nursing home staff will be actively screened daily and dedicated to working at Community Living Centers.

VA's 24 major spinal cord injury and disorder centers (SCI/Ds) across the country serve the needs of a unique patient population of more than 24,000 Veterans who are also vulnerable to infection. To minimize the risk of exposure, effective March 10 and until further notice, VA is taking the following actions:

- All VA SCI/Ds will adopt a “No Visitor” stance, meaning no outside visitors will be permitted to see inpatients.
 - The only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life.
 - In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran’s room only.
- All VA SCI/Ds will limit inpatient admissions to addressing acute clinical needs.
 - This means all VA SCI/Ds will avoid inpatient admissions for routine matters, including annual exams and respite, which will now be done on an outpatient basis.
- VA SCI/D staff will be actively screened daily and dedicated to working at SCI/Ds.

“While the COVID-19 risk to average Americans remains low, these commonsense measures will help protect some of our most vulnerable patients,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA will make every effort to minimize the impact of these policies on Veterans while putting patient safety first.”

For more information about Coronavirus and COVID-19 visit [CDC coronavirus disease 2019](#).

###