

## **PRINT-Reigniting Medical Services with a Safety First Mindset**

OSF HealthCare has always made safety job #1 but leaders working on gradually resuming what were deemed non-essential services are re-doubling efforts to keep patients and Mission Partners safe from infection. The Illinois Department of Public Health said the procedures can restart on May 11 if hospitals and outpatient surgery centers meet certain guidelines. The guidelines include many of the processes OSF HealthCare has already put in place.

Steve Looney is Regional Director of Facility Operations for OSF HealthCare Saint Luke Medical Center in Kewanee, OSF HealthCare Holy Family Medical Center in Monmouth and OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center in Galesburg. He says the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened fears and everyone will need reassurance it's safe to return to medical facilities, surgery centers, hospitals and walk-in clinics such as OSF Urgo and OSF PromptCare.

Looney says staff have been assigned to wipe down high-touch areas such as doorknobs, railings, elevators, counters, switches, even pens.

He also stressed OSF HealthCare uses the best and safest products.

"We make sure that all of our chemicals are looked at by the infection preventionist. They're approved and they meet the CDC guidelines. Supply Chain does a wonderful job of making sure we get those products. Really what we're trying to do at the end of the day is to provide a very safe environment for all of our patients and all of our loved ones - whether they're a patient or a Mission Partner," he said.

Surgery suites and procedure rooms are checked and double checked to ensure safety.

"We're making sure everything is disinfected and maintaining a sterile environment. We use the proper checklists, the proper products for the kill times. We even know what the air exchanges are in the rooms that patients will be in so we know how long the room needs to sit before we can go in and properly clean and sanitize them," he explained.

As our facilities' needs dictate, OSF is using advanced ultraviolet technologies to disinfect entire rooms including those with hard-to-reach places. Looney said the [TruD](#) technology destroys pathogens using an automated, measured dose of UVC to disinfect an entire room.

"It goes into the room and in about one hour, the room will be disinfected and safe for the treatment of the next patient."

Some facilities also use electrostatic sprayers for large scale or hard to disinfect surfaces such as seat cushions, beds, waiting rooms, wheelchairs, even ambulances.

Housekeeper Kaylene Krause says people should feel safer coming into a medical facility than other public places they've been allowed to visit under stay-at-home orders, because infection prevention is a daily part of everyone's routine.

"We're used to doing it and I would feel better coming here than all these others places (where) they're not used to doing that and we are because we do it every day," she stressed.

Dr. Brian Curtis, director of Specialty Practices for OSF Medical Group in Peoria, says resuming services means being mindful of how patients are scheduled.

“We’re masking. We’re asking people to wear a mask when they come in and we’re looking at splitting visits types, especially around well child checks. So splitting visits where we’ll have half a day for well child and the other half of the day being illness visits to decrease the exposure risks,” Dr. Curtis explained.

Patients will also notice reduced traffic in waiting rooms, which will look a little different.

“We’re increasing the distances between seats. We’re removing the double seats or we’re putting “Please do not sit” on them. We’re screening people as they come into the facilities now and we’re also screening them over the phone. We’ve also instituted video visits to allow us to do these visits remotely to keep people home and to improve convenience and access,” according to Dr. Curtis.

There’ll be physical distancing cues with marks on the floor, sneeze guards at reception desks to prevent close face-to-face encounters, and no more magazines.

“To prevent the spread of the virus, we have covered or removed water coolers – a very high-touch surface that’s very difficult for us to keep clean on a regular basis. And that’s all to protect people to decrease their exposure,” he said.

OSF HealthCare is also screening everyone who comes into facilities, including patients, to ensure those who are ill are kept away from other patients as much as possible. Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms is encouraged to call their care provider, use the website’s chatbot Clare, or call the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).

According to Curtis, the gradual return of most services and patient care is not about getting “back to normal,” but finding a safe, new normal and holding true to the OSF Mission to serve with the greatest care and love.