

## OSF HealthCare Prepares to Reopen Services

During the global novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the drive of OSF HealthCare has remained the same: to provide quality health care to everyone who needs it, while keeping our patients, their families and our Mission Partners as safe as possible.

This meant briefly closing non-essential services and procedures to focus efforts and resources on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, as its Emergency Departments continue to see a steady decrease in patients with respiratory complaints, OSF HealthCare will begin reopening services previously deemed non-essential.

Starting Monday, May 11, a phased approach will begin, bringing these services back across the Ministry throughout the month.

Every facility will take increased measures to keep those seeking care safe from infection. OSF HealthCare has always been committed to supply a safe and sanitary environment for all patients, and now will also incorporate new guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) into its day-to-day processes.

“Any new developments, any new recommendations on screening, on testing of patients, of Mission Partners, in the rare event that visitors do have to be with a loved one, we will be using those same sorts of best practices,” explained Dr. Ralph Velazquez, Chief Medical Officer for OSF HealthCare. “That’s what we are incorporating into our traditional processes.”

Dr. Velazquez says he recognizes that people might be fearful to come into a hospital or surgery center during a pandemic. However, he reflects on another national crisis to illustrate how we can come out stronger on the other side.

He compares the current state of the world to the fear of flying post-9/11.

“Security was never higher than it was immediately after that. And while it was somewhat unsettling to see the amount of security available, we knew that everything was being inspected,” recalled Dr. Velazquez. “That’s what’s happening now in health care. We are being even more diligent than we were before to make sure everything is safe.”

Additional safety measures OSF HealthCare has put in place include:

- Whether you have an appointment at a medical practice or are arriving at a hospital, you can expect to go through a quick screening before you enter.
- We have removed some chairs from waiting areas so patients can sit six feet apart, whenever possible. Toys, reading materials, and other objects that cannot be easily cleaned have also been removed.
- We have established special, separate care zones to serve people coming to us for elective procedures at our hospitals. These areas have separate entrances to ensure safe passage.

- In our medical practices, we are taking steps to have fewer patients at once; to keep those who are sick isolated from those who are well, including set times to see well patients and sick patients.
- We are expanding the time between our in-person appointments to have time for deeper more stringent cleaning and disinfecting between patients.
- We have expanded our video conferencing technology. Virtual visits allow a patient to meet face-to-face with their provider from the comfort of home. These visits are safe and effective.
- All of our care teams, including doctors and nurses, are screened daily at the start of their shift with temperature checks, to ensure those providing care are safe to be around.

“We’re putting a lot of things in place, but we are all going to have to get over this fear together, and we need you to remind us when we’re not meeting your expectations,” said Dr. Velazquez.

OSF is also monitoring everyone coming into its hospitals, including Mission Partners, clinicians, vendors, visitors and patients. This means everyone is screened for fever and symptoms. Visitors and staff with symptoms are not allowed to proceed throughout the building.

Anyone who enters a hospital is required to wear a mask. OSF will provide a mask for anyone who doesn’t have one.

For more information on COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, please visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: [www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/](http://www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/). If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, you can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF website, or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).