



*RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICIAN OFFICES FOR OPERATING DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC*

March 31, 2020

*The following guidelines have been prepared for use by healthcare professionals in The Bahamas during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Medical Association of The Bahamas wishes to advise physicians to explore alternatives to face-to-face triage and visits **unless absolutely necessary**. The following options can reduce unnecessary healthcare visits and prevent transmission of respiratory viruses in your facility should an in-office evaluation be required.*

Endorsed by the Ministry of Health

Physician Offices

Preparing your office

- **Provide a number that patients can call to discuss medical concerns if office hours have been reduced or have calls transferred to an office mobile number.**
- *Ensure COVID-19 policies are handy and staff are aware of numbers to call for patients with suspected COVID-19 (See below).*
- *Ensure basic supplies such as soap, sanitizer (70% alcohol), disinfectant, tissues, masks (surgical/N95) and gloves are readily available.*
- *Institute signage for hand and respiratory hygiene*
- *Discuss with staff how you will manage different scenarios.*
- *Discuss how best to isolate and manage patients that are sick or present with acute respiratory infections.*
- *Clean surfaces with 10% bleach solution: 1part bleach to 9 parts water (Standard bleach solution is 5-5.25%).*
- *Disinfectant may also be used for cleaning surfaces.*
- *All waste generated from interaction with suspected COVID-19 cases should be treated as biohazardous waste.*

Prior to the interview and examination

- *Conduct a quick telephone interview with all patients requesting a visit.*
- *Determine which patients can be managed by telephone and which patients will need to come to your office.*

- *Utilize WhatsApp, FaceTime or Skype or call for non-urgent visits
(See coding for telephone visits below)*
- *For emergencies or patients who require face-to-face evaluation and examination, ask the relevant questions **(see point of contact screening below)**.*
- *If a face-to-face evaluation is required, schedule patients so that social distancing protocols can be enforced within your office.*
- *When patients arrive, ask family members to wait outside or in their vehicles unless patient is a minor, elderly or requires assistance.*
- *Have a hand hygiene station at entryway and ask each person entering the facility to first perform hand hygiene*
- *Repeat questionnaire to ensure patients status has not changed since initial phone interview*
- ***Provide a mask immediately for everyone***
- *Isolate patients with respiratory symptoms in a room with door closed or at least 6 feet away from other persons in the office*
- *Enforce social distancing in your waiting area (at least 3-6 feet apart)*

During the interview and examination

- *Perform hand hygiene before and after examining each patient*
- *Avoid touching your face during or after the interview*
- *Have patients turn their head to the side when performing respiratory maneuvers*

Outpatient facilities

- *Reschedule elective surgeries or procedures as necessary.*
- *Urgent diagnostic and surgical procedures should be performed in outpatient settings, when feasible and not in hospitals.*
- *Limit or prohibit family members in waiting areas*
- *For outpatient surgeries or procedures ensure all staff in direct contact wear personal protective equipment (PPE) if aerosolization of body fluids is expected*
- *Ensure that staff are appropriately trained to don and doff PPE when suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are scheduled.*

Point of Contact Screening

1. *Do you have any of the following symptoms?*
 - *Fever*
 - *Cough*
 - *Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath*
 - *Sneezing or runny nose*
 - *Body aches (other than from injury)*
 - *Night sweats*
 - *Severe headaches*
 - *New rashes or open sores with fever*
 - *Eye redness, swelling or discharge*
 - *Unexplained bleeding**
 - *Vomiting or diarrhea*

2. *In the past 3 weeks have you travelled internationally?*
3. *In the past 3 weeks have you been in close contact with someone who has travelled internationally?*
4. *Have you been in close contact with any person confirmed to have COVID-19?*

*If yes to any of the above questions: **Call Ministry of Health***

Surveillance Unit: 502-4776 * 502-4790 * 502-4728

Hotlines: (8a-8p) 376-9350 * (8p-8a) 376-9387

Physician Telehealth Coding Guidelines

New Patient Telehealth

99441 (5-10 min)

99442 (11-20 min)

99443 (21-30 min)

Established Patient Telehealth

99421 (5-10 min)

99422 (11-20 min)

99423 (>20 min)

Telehealth Visit (Consulting Physician)

**Requires verbal or written feedback to initiating physician*

99446 (5-10 min)

99447 (11-20 min)

99448 (21-30 min)

99449 (>31 min)