

## **Coronavirus Guidelines: How to Protect Yourself and What to Do If You Get Sick**

**Salinas, Calif. (March 14, 2020)**—At Natividad, we are prepared and want to be a resource for our community during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are working with the Monterey County Health Department, the California Department of Public Health, along with our other three local hospitals, to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 in Monterey County.

Below are guidelines you should follow to protect yourself and help reduce the spread of the virus. Please read on to know when to come – and when not to come – to the hospital. Most healthy people with mild cold-like symptoms may not need to see a medical provider.

### **In Simple Terms, What is Coronavirus?**

The world is seeing a new virus that has been named novel coronavirus 2019 – also called COVID-19. It is related to a common cold. It causes a fever and a cough. For some people, it can cause difficulty breathing or other complications that might require hospitalization. For a small number of people, it can be deadly. Those who get sickest tend to have weak immune systems or be over 60 years old. Just like the common cold, coronavirus spreads by contact with people who have the virus through cough, snot and saliva droplets from the nose and mouth.

### **How to Protect Yourself**

Many of the same steps that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends against seasonal flu will also help reduce the spread of COVID-19. They include:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap is not available, use a hand sanitizer with 60-95% alcohol
- Avoid touching your face with your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects often
- Stay at least six feet away from a person who is ill
- Consider delaying travel to areas with outbreaks of COVID-19
- If you haven't already, get a flu shot. The flu is still circulating in our communities
- If you are in a high-risk group – age 60 or older or have other health conditions – stay home, do not be around sick people and avoid small and large groups
- Put distance between yourself and other people. Avoid large groups

### **What to Do If You Get Sick**

If you do get sick, it is important to take steps to keep from spreading the virus to others. People who are mildly ill and not considered at increased risk for complications are often able to isolate at home during their illness. You may feel like you have a bad cold or the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you:

- Restrict activities outside your home

- ❑ Do not go to work, school or public areas
- ❑ Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing or taxis
- ❑ Wear a standard surgical-style mask (covering nose and mouth) around other people
- ❑ Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- ❑ Wash your hands often
- ❑ Consider the use of over-the-counter medications to reduce symptoms of fever, coughing and congestion
- ❑ Isolate yourself from others

### **When to See a Doctor**

We urge people to use the emergency room only for serious illness and medical emergencies like injuries, difficulty breathing, chest pain and altered levels of consciousness. If you have only mild symptoms — and aren't in a high-risk group — it's best to contact your physician from home and not come to the hospital.

If you do have difficulty breathing or need immediate medical attention, please seek urgent or emergency care or call 911 and inform the operator of your symptoms. Please be sure to contact your doctor's office or hospital and tell them you may have coronavirus before you arrive so we can take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed. It's also very important to ask for and wear a mask (a standard surgical mask is fine) over your mouth and nose when you arrive and before you have contact with anyone.

Natividad's providers, the Monterey County Department of Public Health and the CDC determine who to screen and who to test for COVID-19.

### **High-Risk Groups**

People at increased risk for complications who develop any coronavirus symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath should contact their doctor. High-risk populations include people over 60, young children, people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung or kidney functions or diabetes. The CDC recommends that if you fall into this group to stay home and avoid activities such as traveling by airplane, going to movie theaters, attending family events, shopping at crowded malls and going to religious services.

### **Steps Natividad Is Taking**

Natividad is following all CDC guidelines when caring for patients with confirmed or possible COVID-19. We are ensuring all staff members who may be in contact with a COVID-19 patient are correctly trained on using Personal Protective Equipment.

Currently, we are asking COVID-19 screening questions for all patients. We are paying close attention to people who have a cough, fever and those who have recently traveled to determine if they are at risk for COVID-19.

Natividad also has medical tents set up in front of the Emergency Department to allow us the option to screen people for respiratory viruses. The medical tents provide a safe environment for our patients and can help prevent the spread of the virus to others.

For more information about COVID-19, please visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/covid-19](http://www.cdc.gov/covid-19).

**Hospital Phone Numbers:**

Natividad: (831) 755-4111

CHOMP (Montage): (831) 624-5311

Salinas Valley Memorial: (831) 757-4333

Mee Memorial: (831) 385-6000

**About Natividad**

Natividad is a hospital and trauma center providing high-quality health care to everyone in Monterey County, regardless of ability to pay. Located in Salinas, Calif., Natividad is a public health care system offering a wide range of inpatient, outpatient, emergency, diagnostic and specialty medical care. Founded in 1886, the 172-bed medical center has more than 10,000 admissions and over 50,000 emergency visits annually. Home to the area's only Level II Trauma Center, the hospital's specialized personnel, equipment and services provide a vital local community service that saves lives and keeps patients close to home. Natividad's Baby-Friendly® facility delivered more than 2,200 babies last year and is affiliated with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals. It also operates an accredited Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, giving the tiniest and most fragile babies — some as small as one pound — the best chance for a healthy start. Through its UCSF-affiliated Natividad Family Medicine Residency, Natividad is the only teaching hospital on the Central Coast. For more information, please call (831) 755-4111 or visit [www.natividad.com](http://www.natividad.com).