



# Guidance for Health Care Providers of Patients at Increased Risk for Severe Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

## Introduction

There is an outbreak of respiratory disease which affects breathing caused by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a novel (new) coronavirus. The NYC Health Department is closely monitoring this outbreak. For the latest information, visit [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/coronavirus).

This document includes guidance on how New York City health care providers can help patients who may be at risk for severe manifestations of COVID-19, prepare for, and prevent the disease. General information about COVID-19 for providers may be found [here](#).

### Who is at risk for severe illness due to COVID-19?

Because COVID-19 is a newly identified disease, there is limited information on its clinical spectrum and risk factors for severe complications from COVID-19 infection. An early [World Health Organization report](#) suggests that most cases are mild.

To date, factors associated with severe illness include:

- Advanced age—children and young adults appear to be less affected by complications
- Chronic medical conditions such as chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and a weakened immune system

Although information on other risk factors for severe COVID-19 is currently lacking, it is prudent to consider persons with advanced immunosuppression, including those with hematopoietic malignancies or undergoing chemotherapy, and patients on chronic hemodialysis, to be at increased risk.

### What steps can providers take to help protect their patients at possible increased risk of severe COVID-19?

For general guidance on preparing clinical settings for community and widespread transmission of COVID-19, please see:

- [CDC: Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for COVID-19](#)
- [CDC: Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities: Preparing for Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States](#)

Some steps that can be taken to avoid exposing patients who may be at increased risk for severe complications from COVID-19 include:

- Encourage staff members to take routine preventive actions, including hand hygiene.
- Incentivize your staff members to stay out of work if ill (e.g., compensated sick leave).
- Encourage your staff members to be vaccinated for influenza.
- Schedule designated times to manage at-risk patients
- Plan to separate patients with respiratory symptoms from other patients who are waiting for care. Identify separate, well-ventilated spaces for patients with and without symptoms.
- Provide influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations as indicated.

- Prescribe refills of essential medications for several months when possible.
- Plan to stay in touch with patients by telemedicine, phone or email, when possible.
- Provide information to patients with risk factors for severe COVID-19 on how they can prepare at home. See [Guidance for People Who May Have an Increased Risk for Severe Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

### **What steps can patients at possible increased risk of severe COVID-19 take?**

Patients can take several steps now to prepare for community outbreak of COVID-19. See [Guidance for People Who May Have an Increased Risk for Severe Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for patient guidance.

### **Helpful Resources**

- New York City Health Department website: [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/coronavirus)
- CDC information for healthcare professionals: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html)