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.

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

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
• CDC information for healthcare professionals: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html