COVID-19 Information for Patients

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 is highly contagious and is spread by close person-to-person contact. As a result, federal and state health agencies recommend physical distancing and face coverings to reduce the risk of infection.

2. People can transmit the COVID-19 virus without symptoms. Even with a negative test, people can still be infected or develop infection afterwards. This is why VA currently requires all staff and patients wear masks in our facilities to reduce the spread of infection.

3. There is a risk you could become infected with COVID-19 when coming to a health care setting. Although the risk of becoming infected is likely higher in regions where COVID-19 is more widespread, the exact risk of transmission in a VA facility is unknown.

   a. If you are exposed to a person found to have COVID-19 infection, you will be contacted by your provider and given instructions on self-care and testing.
   b. Most contact does not constitute an exposure given the use of personal protective equipment employed by our staff and the use of face coverings by our patients.

4. VA is taking multiple steps to ensure you and other Veterans are protected when coming to a VA facility to receive needed medical care, although these steps cannot eliminate all the risk. These steps include:

   a. Screening patients for symptoms of COVID-19 infection when they enter a VA facility;
   b. Asking patients and visitors to wear a face covering when they enter a VA facility;
   c. Ensuring VA medical staff use appropriate personal protective equipment;

    d. Emphasizing the importance for staff to regularly and carefully clean their hands;

    e. Disinfecting equipment and procedure areas to remove the coronavirus after treatment; and

    f. Training staff on how to reduce the spread of the infection and protect patients.

5. After discharge from a health care setting, you should follow federal and local guidance to decrease the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19:

    a. Wear a mask or face covering when out in public;

    b. Wash your hands frequently, especially before and after eating, upon entering and exiting a building, and after using the restroom;

    c. Practice social distancing, staying at least 6 feet away from others who may be carrying the virus; and

    d. Monitor yourself for symptoms.

6. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 after discharge (fever or chills, new cough, worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, sore throat, muscle aches, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea), contact your health care provider for guidance and testing or call the Telephone Care Line at 800-865-2441.

7. Learn more by visiting the VA's Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions website at: https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions.

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