

GUIDELINES ON REOPENING CLINICS

(Guidelines are subject to change based on updates from CDC or NYC/NYS Departments of Health)

CAIPA developed guidelines to support our physician-members to continue to provide quality care to our patient population in a safe environment. These are general recommendations for providers to consider as they design and implement their own protocols. Each clinic is unique among different specialties, and protocols will be as well. Reopening clinics will involve many factors.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND SUPPLIES

Ensure that your clinic has adequate supplies of PPE.

- Surgical masks and N95 respirator masks.
- Gloves.
- Goggles and/or eye protection shields.
- Isolation gowns.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- EPA-approved disinfectant solution/spray/wipes. Check EPA List-N.
- Paper towels and tissues.
- Touchless covered trash cans. Garbage can liners/bags.
- Non-contact thermometers.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROCEDURES

- Inspect and repair any infrastructure, such as HVAC system, water system, electrical system and electronic communications system.
- Maintain high rate of air exchange/ventilation.
- Disinfect and sanitize all high traffic areas including equipment in the clinic.
- Remove any non-essential items in the waiting room (e.g.: magazines, brochures, clipboards, etc.) to keep all surfaces clean.
- Set up protective screen at your front desk (e.g.: clear plastic sneeze guard (plexiglass) with opening at the bottom for access).
- Sanitize any writing instruments used by the patients.
- Indicate increments of 6 feet on the floor by the front desk.
- Organize seating in the waiting room so patients can remain 6 feet apart.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be placed at the front desk.
- Sanitize all the door knobs, door handles, and elevator buttons periodically.
- Sanitize all the medical instruments touched the patients, such as BP cuffs, Stethoscope, Otoscope, Thermometers (may be touched accidentally), EKG wires.
- Sanitize all waiting area fixture periodically.
- Post patient education signage in your clinic which are available from the Departments of Health.

CLINIC STAFF

- All staff should wear masks and wash their hands as soon as they enter the office.
- Check the staff's temperature.
- Eye protection, mask and gloves should be worn when patient's face mask needs to be taken off.
- Use N95 respirator mask, eye protection and isolation gown when performing/participating in aerosol generating procedures.
- Schedule a timetable during office hours, a minimum of twice daily, to wipe down all frequently touched surfaces (e.g.: doorknobs/handles, chair armrests, desks, phones, computer keyboards, etc.)
- Office staff should practice frequent hand hygiene.

- If possible, maintain social distancing.
- Staff should avoid having meals together.
- Before closing for the day, all frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned with EPA-approved disinfectant.

OFFICE VISITS

• PRIOR TO THE VISIT

- Do not accept any walk-ins. Patients should be seen by appointment only.
- Determine and allocate a limited number of appointments per day.
- Day before appointment, clinic staff should confirm the appointment and ask if patient or anyone in the household has any COVID-19 symptoms or taking any fever reducing agent. (Any essential worker, healthcare worker, home health aide, etc. in your home?)
- Instruct patients to call the clinic prior to their appointment if they are febrile, experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or feel sick.
 - Offer Telehealth service or ask patients to reschedule their appointments if they are febrile or symptomatic.

• DURING THE VISIT

- No more than two (2) appointments should be waiting in the office at any given time. This is to minimize crowding in the waiting room or prolong waiting time while maintaining social distancing.
- Only patients may enter the office for appointment except pediatric patients. Caregivers and family members can assist patients to the front door of the office but should wait outside to avoid overcrowding in the waiting room.
- Patients should be wearing a mask when they arrive at the front desk. If patients do not have a mask, provide a mask to them.
- Check the patient's temperature.
- Patients should thoroughly clean their hands with hand sanitizer when arriving and leaving the clinic.
- No eating/drinking in the waiting room except for water.
- After each patient visit, wipe down consultation/examination room furniture and surfaces with EPA-approved disinfectant.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION: PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

It is more difficult to manage pediatric patients in terms of social distancing, especially since they are accompanied by at least one parent/caregiver. Therefore, no more than one (1) or two (2) appointments should be considered. The appointments are also an opportunity to do any scheduled or missed vaccinations during this public health emergency. It will protect the pediatric patient population from infection of any other communicable diseases if there is no contraindication at the time of visit.

For continuing updates on recommended guidelines, please visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/>)

NYC Department of Health (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/index.page>)

NYS Department of Health (<https://health.ny.gov/>)

OSHA (<https://www.osha.gov/>)

EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>)