

# What You Need To Know About The Safety of Northside Hospital

## Safely Coming To Northside During The Pandemic

### **Is Northside Hospital seeing non-COVID patients in person - and is that safe?**

Yes, we are seeing non-COVID patients in person. Northside maintains a safe, healthy environment by following CDC guidelines to protect patients and staff. If you need any health care treatment or need an appointment with your doctor, we are ready to see you.

### **What specific measures are Northside taking to keep everyone safe? Do doctors and nurses wear masks? Are there plastic barriers like I see at the grocery store?**

We follow CDC guidelines that include healthcare personnel wearing masks; limiting visitors; screening patients, employees and visitors; ensuring any visitor and waiting area seats are a minimum of 6 feet apart; using technology and disinfection protocols to clean common areas thoroughly; and erecting Plexiglas or plastic barriers where needed.

### **Does Northside disinfect its facilities? What parts, how do you do it, and how often?**

Our extensive disinfection protocol includes environmental controls (for things like appropriate air exchanges), surface cleaning, and extensive cleaning in areas that need even more attention for disinfection. We ensure our staff are trained on how to disinfect, when to disinfect, and the appropriate way to disinfect.

### **I'm afraid of being exposed to COVID if I go to the hospital or my doctor's office. What are my chances of catching COVID at Northside?**

The chance of catching COVID at Northside is extremely low because of our multiple safety steps.

### **Aside from COVID concerns, what does Northside do on a regular basis to ensure patient safety?**

Our comprehensive patient safety program encompasses intensive staff training, regularly performing drills of high-risk events, and consistently monitoring our outcomes.

### **Is it safe to go to the emergency room? Isn't that where all the COVID patients are?**

It is safe to come to any Northside Hospital emergency room or urgent care center. We isolate suspected COVID patients, which protects all other patients and staff.

### **How many COVID cases do you have now? Can you break that out by hospital location in your system?**

The number of COVID cases at each of our hospitals varies day to day. Our COVID cases track with state trends and we have plenty of safe capacity for non-COVID patients.

### **Beyond Northside's five hospitals, are safety protocols taken at all Northside facilities - like physicians' practices, urgent care centers, imaging centers, etc.?**

Yes, we ensure patient safety by following CDC guidelines at all facilities throughout the Northside Hospital Health Care System.

### **Are Northside health professionals regularly screened for COVID-19?**

#### **How do I know I won't catch coronavirus from them?**

Northside health professionals are regularly screened for symptoms of COVID-19. We have implemented all CDC guidelines to ensure the safety of our patients, providers, and staff.



# What You Need To Know

## About The Safety of Northside Hospital

**How's the medical staff in general bearing up under the pressure of this pandemic? I want to know they're at their best when they see me.**

The medical staff comprises highly trained professionals at all levels. They have been extremely engaged, proactive, and optimistic even under the pressure of this pandemic. They have worked together to develop effective protocols and processes to ensure our patients get the highest level of care.

**Can I get COVID testing at Northside?**

We test all patients admitted to our Northside Hospitals. We are also testing patients before elective procedures or surgeries.

**What is Northside's visitor policy - and when will it change?**

Our visitor policy reflects current CDC guidelines - and we change when there are updates. Our current policy is located online at <https://www.northside.com/visiting> for your convenience.

**Are the public restrooms in Northside's hospitals safe to use?**

The public restrooms are cleaned according to our rigorous disinfection policies. Most importantly, they are well-stocked with items to perform hand hygiene, which is one of the most important ways to ensure safety.

## What To Expect During My Northside Appointment

**A family member or a friend brings me to my appointments. Can that person come inside the doctor's office with me for my in-person appointment?**

Right now, there are some limitations for companions to accompany patients for office visits. This is to keep patients, visitors and staff safe. Please contact the office you will visit to learn the specific protocol there.

**Do I need to wear a mask to my appointment? What if I don't have one?**

Yes, we do require patients to wear masks to their appointments. If you have a mask, please wear it. If you don't have one, a mask will be provided to you.

**After my appointment at my doctor's office, should I do anything different when I go home to make sure I stay free of COVID?**

The CDC recommends several things you can do : ensure you are washing your hands frequently and disinfecting hard surfaces in your home. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. After wearing your mask in public, be sure to wash your hands before and after removing your mask. Always perform hand hygiene before you touch your face or other surfaces.

**Are all Northside practices open, even if I need surgery or another procedure? I thought the governor had halted elective procedures.**

Northside halted elective surgeries for a period of time, according to the state and national guidelines. We have resumed elective surgeries, again following national and state guidelines, and we are using a thoughtful, tiered approach while keeping a close eye on the number of COVID patients in our counties, states, and facilities.



# What You Need To Know

## About The Safety of Northside Hospital

### **Why is it safe for Northside to re-start elective surgeries and re-open other parts of its system when there's some question whether COVID cases are even declining in Georgia?**

Northside monitors the number of hospitalized patients in our facilities as well as other facilities in the state each day. We are also able to monitor the demand for critical care services such as the use of ventilators. These statistics are much more reliable than case counts and testing counts. This daily monitoring enables us to ensure that we can safely meet the needs of all patients treated at Northside.

### **What do I need to do before I come to a Northside hospital or doctor's office? Should I wear a mask or gloves?**

We recommend that our patients wear a mask when entering a Northside facility or doctor's office. Please call ahead if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Frequent hand hygiene and handwashing is always recommended. Please do not wear gloves into the hospital or a doctor's office. Handwashing and hand hygiene is the most effective method to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Avoid touching your face, as recommended by the CDC.

### **I'm 70 years old and am being treated for cancer. Do you have extra safety measures in place to make sure I'll be OK?**

Northside Hospital takes many steps to keep cancer patients safe in both outpatient and inpatient settings. You can expect many of the following activities depending on where you may go for cancer treatment.

#### **Outpatient Facility or Clinic**

- Phone call before your appointment to screen for any issues related to COVID-19.
- Screening process at entry into the clinic every time you come that includes asking you questions, taking your temperature, asking you to remove gloves you have on, using hand sanitizer, and being asked to wear a mask the entire time you are in the clinic.
- Placing you in a separate area of the clinic if there are any concerns determined from your screening process and facilitating process for COVID-19 testing, if appropriate.
- Screening of all clinic staff and physicians daily upon entry to clinic.
- Providing facemasks for all patients, physicians and staff members.
- Limiting people in the waiting room / clinic through scheduling and a "No Visitor" policy (special circumstances may require physician approval for presence and screening of one caregiver).
- Spacing between chairs both in the lobby and in the infusion area and if needed, the use of dividers or screens between chairs.
- Proper cleaning of and disinfection of environmental surfaces .
- Removal of all magazines and complimentary coffee machines.
- Offering appointments using telehealth with a computer or your cell phone from home when appropriate.

#### **Inpatient - Emergency Room or Hospital**

- Screening process at entry into the facility that includes asking you questions, taking your temperature, using hand sanitizer, and being asked to wear a mask during all interactions with healthcare providers.
- Testing for the COVID-19 virus.
- No visitors allowed to be with you inside the facility unless there is a special reason. Approved visitors will be screened for illness prior to entering the facility and will not be allowed to visit if they are experiencing an illness or have recently had known exposure to someone with an illness.

# What You Need To Know

## About The Safety of Northside Hospital

### **If I can't bring my spouse or partner with me into a doctor's office, where should they go? And how can I reach them if needed?**

A family member or friend accompanying a patient to a visit will ideally stay in the car during the visit. If they are needed, a staff member can go to the car to notify them or they could be called on their cell phone.

### **How do I prepare for my appointment with a Northside professional - how's the experience different than before the pandemic started? What's the check-in procedure? Are waiting rooms open or do I wait in my car?**

You may be asked to wait in your car and then will be called when it is time for you to be taken back for your appointment. Once you are in the office for the visit, other than wearing a mask, and following social distancing protocols, the visit is very similar to what you've always experienced.

### **I feel "off," but I don't have a cough or fever. Can I keep my in-person Northside appointment?**

You can keep your in-person appointment at Northside, though mention your symptoms during your visit pre-screening. There are several reasons a person could be feeling "off" besides having COVID. We recommend being seen by a medical professional if you're not feeling well.

### **Some stores offer "contactless" payment like Google Pay or Apple Pay to reduce contact with other people. What about Northside?**

Northside has contactless payment options available.

## Virtual Visits To See Northside Professionals From Home

### **What's a "virtual visit" and can it replace an in-person visit?**

A virtual visit enables a provider to speak with the patient by phone or video, hear the patient's concerns and symptoms, and when appropriate, make clinical recommendations based on the patient's symptoms or needs. When appropriate, virtual visits can replace in-person visits.

### **If lockdown conditions ease, will Northside continue virtual visits?**

When possible, virtual visits are a convenient, safe way for patients to receive care. More virtual visits are possible because of expanded permission granted by government regulators and insurance companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. When medically appropriate, we expect to continue virtual visits as regulations allow.

### **Does insurance pay for virtual visits? Are virtual visits cheaper than in-person visits?**

Virtual visits are covered by insurance. They cost the same as in-person visits.

# What You Need To Know

## About The Safety of Northside Hospital

### See Something, Say Something

**What if I see someone not social distancing or someone not wearing PPE while I'm at Northside? What should I do?**

If you should see someone not wearing a mask or other personal protective equipment, please contact our Patient Relations Team at 404-851-8083. They will help to address the issue.

**What if, during my visit, I see someone that I suspect has COVID? What should I do? What will Northside do?**

If you have any concerns, please ask to speak to the unit manager, office coordinator, or call Patient Relations.

**What if I have COVID or been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID? Can I still be seen at Northside?**

Yes, you can be seen at Northside. You will be asked if you've been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID and you will be screened for symptoms.