



Guidance on COVID-19 and care for people living with HIV

March 23, 2020, v.3

Please find below guidance for HIV providers and people living with HIV (PLWH) during the COVID-19 outbreak and local East Bay efforts to push back the spread. Please feel free to direct patients, community members and other providers to use the webpage below for updates, guidance and resources.

Updates will be continuously added to this webpage: www.ebgtz.org/update/covid-19/

HIV service providers: protocol guidance during COVID outbreak

In conjunction with following your clinic's general COVID protocols, please see below for unique considerations for HIV services. This document incorporates guidance from ZSFGH Ward 86, Kaiser, CDPH, DHCS, and HRSA/HAB.

1. Plan for rapid linkages and re-engagement in care: Rapid ART is more important than ever to reduce the number of in-person visits and contacts needed for a patient to get on treatment. You could do a hybrid in-person nurse or case manager intake with a remote provider visit/prescription and same-day labs. Covered CA has opened a special enrollment period through June and ADAP is allowing remote enrollments.

2. Telehealth visits: Telehealth visits count as linkage, retention and ARIES visits and are now billable as medical visits to Medi-Cal PPS. ADAP is providing eligibility extensions through June.

- For patients who are stable and doing well and don't need to be seen in-person. You may also defer the visit if you need to prioritize other patients who need more support.
- For patients with low CD4 counts (<200) in the past 6-12 months or opportunistic illnesses if they can be safely managed at home with remote communication.
- Document in the electronic health record as a clinic visit per your clinic's protocols.
- Make sure your call center knows to direct scheduling calls to your team to determine if the patient needs to be seen in person.
- Please review upcoming people with upcoming visits and call patients one week in advance to offer telehealth visits.

3. Prioritize in-person visits for those in your clinical judgment for whom the benefits of an in-person visit outweighs the risks. This may include people who:

- Are not virologically suppressed and need in-person adherence support
- Are unstably housed
- Need initial linkage to care or those re-engaging in care
- Don't have phones or have difficulty communicating with a phone
- Present themselves directly to the clinical site (drop-in)

4. Defer routine labs and consolidate lab visits:

- Defer routine labs for people who are stable until after shelter-in-place.
- For those who need to get labs during shelter-in-place, combine labs and other in-person needs into one visit so people don't have multiple visits to get labs done.
- Prioritize labs for people with acute symptoms or exposures, including those with STI symptoms and exposures. Click here for Sex and COVID community guidance from NYC Health.

5. Provide the maximum medication refills patients can safely store and track.

- Offer mail-order delivery if the patient can safely receive them at a mailing address. Many pharmacies are now offering this service to reduce the need for in-person pickup.
- [ADAP](#) is now allowing for early 90-day refills. [Click here](#) for a list of mail order pharmacies.
- There are no currently reported ART outages but there are concerns about the antiretroviral supply chain as global manufacturing gets impacted by the pandemic and some protease inhibitors are being used/studied for COVID-19 treatment. Avoid switching a patient to a protease-inhibitor regimen at this time if it's not necessary.

6. Prioritize PrEP activities:

- Continue supporting people already on PrEP on adherence, labs and refills.
- For new PrEP patients who are potentially exposed to HIV during shelter-in-place, consider prioritizing them for either telehealth or in-person visits to get baseline labs and starting PrEP same-day if possible.
- For new patients not yet on PrEP who are not potentially exposed during shelter-in-place, consider deferring PrEP start until after.

7. COVID management for people living with HIV:

- Continue antiretroviral therapy (ART) through COVID management either in home isolation or hospital and follow current general COVID management guidelines.
- Avoid ART substitutions and consult ID/HIV specialists if liquid forms are needed.
- Please also see [more detailed DHHS guidance on this webpage](#).

Guidance around Bay Area Shelter-in-place order March 17 to April 7

On March 16, 2020, Alameda County and Contra Costa County joined Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties with the City of Berkeley on a legal order directing their respective residents to shelter at home for three weeks beginning March 17. On March 19, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced a statewide shelter-in-place order. The order limits activity, travel and business functions to only the most essential needs. [The full Alameda County shelter-in-place order can be downloaded by clicking here](#).

By practicing the universal precautions below, we acknowledge that we are all at risk and that we can all work together to protect one another and work together to push back the spread.

Prevention and reducing spread for all community members, including PLWH:

The COVID-19 virus is transmitted via respiratory droplets and mainly spread person-to-person. Prevention strategies for community members including preventing the spread of respiratory droplets, cleaning hands and surfaces, limiting contact, taking usual medications and wellness practices. For health care providers, rapid identification, diagnosis and safe/supportive isolation and management is critical.

During the shelter-in-place order from March 17 to April 7, 2020 in the Bay Area, for people who are housed:

- Stay at home as much as possible while maintaining socially connected remotely through phone, video, chats, etc.
- Avoid close contact (less than 6 feet) with anyone you don't live with.
- You may leave your home for essential tasks, including buying food, groceries, supplies; obtaining medical care; working at a business or government function that's deemed essential (health care, pharmacies, first responders, telecommunications, transit, construction, places to buy groceries or takeout, banks, mail and delivery services, residential facilities and shelters, some child care facilities, others; [full list here](#)); or caring for a family member or pet in another household. Whenever possible, try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people.

- You may also go outdoors for fresh air and exercise so long as you stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- All non-essential travel during this time should be canceled.
- Follow the additional hygiene practices below.

Everyone, including people living with HIV are advised to take the same precautions:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol frequently and before and after touching things touched by many other people (door knobs, bus/BART/escalator handles and rails, elevator buttons, etc.).
- Carry hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and clean tissues with you.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face; if you do, use a clean tissue and/or sanitize your hands before and after.
- Greet people with smiles, waves, bows or elbow bumps rather than shaking hands or other physical contact.
- Avoid close contact (less than 6 feet) with anyone coughing or sneezing.
- Get the flu vaccine if you haven't already.
- Take your regular medications every day as prescribed.
- Have at least 2 weeks to 3 months of medications on hand when possible.

People older than 60, with lower CD4 counts, with heart or lung conditions, and people living with HIV who are not on antiretroviral treatment are also advised to:

- Create a plan for getting your clinical care by phone or video.
- Get the maximum refills of antiretrovirals and other medications you can safely store and track.
- Avoid non-essential travel.
- Stay away from people who are sick or at least limit contact.
- Have 2 weeks of food and other household necessities on hand when possible.

Notes about face masks:

- If you are healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected coronavirus-19 infection.
- Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing.
- Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, as well as safe disposal.
- Regular "surgical" masks are sufficient for protection against usual exposure coronavirus droplets. N95 masks can be reserved for the situation when the droplets are aerosolized during medical/surgical procedures.

If you feel sick:

Stay at home if you feel unwell and call your provider before going to the clinic to get up-to-date instructions. Due to shortages in the COVID-19 test, testing is reserved for the people in most need (those who are very sick and caregivers of people at risk of becoming very sick). Many clinics are now providing assessments, consults and guidance over the phone or via video chats. If your symptoms are mild, you may be advised to stay home to recover and keep distance with others.

Please see this webpage for CDC guidance on what to do if you are sick and/or are on home isolation.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, go to your nearest emergency room if unstable, or if stable, please call your provider to get instructions so you can be routed to the appropriate health facility.

If you don't have a provider and have COVID symptoms: In Alameda County, call Alameda Health System 510-437-8500 for a phone screen and guidance. In Contra Costa County, call 844-729-8410. In Solano County, the county COVID warmline is 707-784-8988.

Resources and links

***Resources for people living with HIV and HIV advocates:**

[COVID-19 Information for People Living with HIV from the CA Dept of Public Health](#)

[CDC webpage on COVID-19: What people with HIV should know](#)

[POZ Magazine: What People With HIV Need to Know About the New Coronavirus](#)

[San Francisco Getting to Zero guidance for people living with HIV \(PDF\)](#)

[San Francisco Getting to Zero COVID-19 response updates](#)

[Alameda Health Consortium information for community members in English, Spanish and Chinese about COVID-19](#)

[Immigrants Rising: COVID-19 resources for undocumented communities \(Google document\)](#)

[Oakland LGBTQ Center is open M-F, 12-5 pm for pick-up of free food and hygiene bags](#)

[CA state document on eliminating cost-sharing \(co-pays, deductibles, or coinsurance\) for all medically necessary screening and testing for COVID-19.](#)

[NASTAD memo on the impact of COVID-19 on HIV and hepatitis programs March 10, 2020](#)

***Resources for health providers:**

[EBGTZ and HIV ACCESS COVID-19 contingency plans for HIV providers](#)

[Alameda County Homeless and Health Care Services Community COVID-19 updates](#)

[HRSA Ryan White Program: Frequently asked questions on COVID-19 impact on programs](#)

[ADAP Contingency plan for COVID-19: extensions, remote enrollment, early fills and 90-day refills: March 16, 2020](#)

[Medi-Cal guidance on billing telehealth visits at FQHCs \(Federally Qualified Health Centers\) to PPS.](#)

[California has eliminated cost-sharing \(co-pays, deductibles, or coinsurance\) for all medically necessary screening, testing and visits for COVID-19. \(3/19\)](#)

[Medicare telehealth and other covered services for COVID-19](#)

***COVID testing info for providers:**

[COVID-19 lab CPT billing code: 87635, "SARS-COV-2 COVID-19 AMP PRB"](#)

[Alameda County Public Health: COVID-19 forms and public health lab testing](#)

[Contra Costa County: COVID-19 info and protocols for providers](#)

[LabCorp COVID-19 Nucleic Acid Amplification \(NAA\) lab test information](#)

[Quest Diagnostics COVID-19 RNA PCR lab test information](#)

***Bay Area COVID-19 updates:**

[Alameda County Public Health Department COVID-19 updates](#)

[Contra Costa Health Services updates](#)

[San Francisco Department of Health COVID-19 updates](#)

[Santa Clara County Public Health Department COVID-19 updates](#)

[Solano Public Health coronavirus \(COVID-19\) updates](#)

[San Francisco Chronicle Coronavirus live updates](#)

[Podcast: KQED Forum](#)

***State, national and global COVID-19 updates:**

[Coronavirus Dashboard](#) tracks the numbers of cases from the state to global level.

[California State and Department of Public Health COVID-19 updates](#)

[CDC: United States Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 updates](#)

[National Health Care for the Homeless COVID-19 resources](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\) COVID-19 updates](#)