

# News Release

## Hospital announces temporary changes in response to COVID-19

Presque Isle, Maine (March 17, 2020) — For the safety of our patients, families, caregivers, staff, and others in our communities, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital has announced temporary changes to our normal operations to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that all who need it receive medical care.

“These are not decisions we have made lightly, and we understand that many will be inconvenient for our patients as well as our staff; however, we must take these actions for everyone’s overall protection and to reserve our resources for those that will most need it when COVID-19 reaches our community,” says Jay Reynolds, MD, senior physician executive at the hospital.

The following is a brief outline of changes that patients and community members should expect effective today (March 17).

### **Cancellation of All Elective Patient Interactions**

All non-essential patient interactions will be deferred for at least the next two weeks. This includes elective surgeries, wellness visits, certain outpatient specialty care visits, non-essential imaging and lab tests, and other interactions as appropriate.

For primary care, we will continue to see patients with acute needs but will be cancelling other appointments, such as annual wellness visits. The exception to this is pediatric patients age 4 and under. Northern Light Pediatrics will continue to do wellness visits for infants and toddlers. All pediatric wellness visits will be scheduled in the morning and sick pediatric patients will be limited to the afternoon. Physicals and wellness visits for those age 5 and older will be rescheduled.

Patients will be notified if their appointment or procedure is being temporarily cancelled. Those who are not contacted should come to their appointment as scheduled. Cancelled appointments will be rescheduled once this health crisis is over.

### **Visitor Policy Changes**

- No visitors will be allowed in the Continuing Care facility in Mars Hill unless it is for a resident at end of life.
- No visitors will be allowed in the Emergency Department or Walk-In Care unless it is a parent of a pediatric patient or, in the ED, a loved one for a patient at end of life.
- Only one visitor per patient will be allowed for our inpatient units (Medical/Surgical, Critical Care, Women & Children, Acute Rehabilitation). That visitor (age 16 or over) must be identified ahead of time and go through the screening process. Visiting hours will be limited to 7am - 7 pm.
- No visitors will be allowed in the treatment areas of the Dialysis Center or Cancer Care. Visitors planning to stay in the waiting room will be screened.

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- While we prefer that patients going to one of our outpatient practices or using imaging/ lab services do so unaccompanied, one visitor will be allowed for those who have a true need.

**Calling Prior to Coming In with Respiratory Symptoms**

Those who plan to come to our Walk-In Care or Emergency Department with a respiratory illness, please call first so you can properly be screened without entering the facility. For the emergency department, call 768.4100. For Walk-In Care, call 760.9278. Please remember to call 9-1-1 if you are having a medical emergency, and alert them to your symptoms.

**Hospital Access**

All visitors must enter AR Gould Hospital through the Levesque (main) entrance or through the Emergency Department entrance. All other entrances will be closed until further notice. Visitors must check in and present for a brief screening immediately upon entering the building.

All public use of the hospital's facilities, including support group meetings, conferences and other gatherings are canceled or postponed.

**Drive Up Testing; By Appointment Only**

The hospital will be offering a drive through testing option on our campus very soon. Patients must be screened over the phone ahead of time and only those with a referral will be seen. Details are being finalized and look for more information soon.

"We appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we navigate this health crisis. We hope to return things to normal as soon as we can," says Reynolds.

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