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# IHA COVID Resources and Advocacy

December 10, 2020

## The latest about COVID-19 from IHA

### Urge Iowa's Members of Congress to allocate needed funds to providers in the next COVID-19 spending package

Leaders from the Senate, House and Administration are working on proposals for a third spending package related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The legislative language has not been made public yet, however a package is expected to come together very quickly, and its imperative Iowa's Congressional lawmakers hear from hospital advocates. **Take action NOW!**

### Personal protective equipment

Iowa hospitals need to respond to the Health Alert Networks request for personal protective equipment supply volumes. This data is critical for IDPH to request and receive supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile. **IDPH will be sending out their next PPE supply update request on Monday.** If your hospital is not receiving Health Alert Network emails, please email [HANofficer@iowahealthalert.org](mailto:HANofficer@iowahealthalert.org) and provide the contact person for your organization. Hospital personal protective equipment requests need to be directed to your county's emergency manager. Hospitals should ensure these correspondence are going through their hospital IT system.

Non-essential medical services not in operation have been asked to donate medical supplies to local hospitals and emergency operations centers.

### Virtual visits

Wellmark is working to increase access to virtual visits for its members during this time:

1. [Virtual visits available](#) without any member cost-share.
2. Wellmark's Iowa and South Dakota network providers will receive the same fee for virtual visits as an in-person visit.

These changes apply to all appropriate medical and behavioral health virtual visits with any Wellmark in-network provider until June 16, 2020. Wellmark will reevaluate this date as needed.

### Virtual visits guidance on coverage and billing

Wellmark's preference is that providers conduct virtual visits via interactive audio-visual technology and that may not be feasible for some members. Therefore, Wellmark will allow telephonic visits through this period, when audio-visual capabilities aren't accessible. For claims to process accurately, providers must follow these billing guidelines:

- Providers should bill the appropriate CPT codes for the services provided ([click here for list](#)).
- Use place of service 02 (telehealth) on the claim for interactive audio-video or telephonic visits.
- Providers conducting telephonic only visits with Wellmark's members during this period must document in their medical records that the visit was conducted via telephone.

• **Benefit information on coverage of virtual visits for Wellmark's members will not be updated on the Claims and Benefits Look-up tool on wellmark.com during this period, so please follow this guidance.**

**Providers must continue to check benefits for other Blue Cross Blue Shield members as their coverage of virtual visits may vary.**

### **Medication access for Wellmark patients with underlying health conditions**

Beginning March 21, 2020, fully insured members will be allowed to fill up to a 90-day supply of medication if, in the judgement of their physician or pharmacist, they should practice social distancing or remain quarantined for a long period of time. For self-funded customers who allow 90-day supply of medication, the process will be the same as fully insured. Without this benefit, they can still access up to a 30-day supply on an early refill. **This option should be used only for those members with underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk.**

Effective March 23, 2020, all prior authorizations for drugs that are due to expire before July will be extended through July to lessen the administrative burden on both pharmacies and provider offices.

### **Questions for Wellmark**

If you have questions regarding this information, please contact your Network Engagement Business Partner.

To receive real-time updates, please [register here](#) for the Wellmark Information Notification System (WINS).

### **COVID-19 Testing Framework for Iowa**

IDPH released criteria for COVID-19 testing and reporting protocols. The State Hygienic Laboratory will continue to perform COVID-19 testing in accordance with one of the following criteria at this time:

- All hospitalized patients with fever and respiratory failure and no alternate diagnosis.
- Older adults (over 60 years old) with fever and respiratory symptoms (cough, difficulty breathing) and chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, immunosuppressive medications, chronic lung disease, or chronic kidney disease).
- People with fever or respiratory illness who live in a congregate setting (i.e., long-term care facilities, dormitories, residential facilities, correctional facilities, treatment facilities).
- Essential services personnel with fever or respiratory illness (i.e., health care providers, fire and EMS, law enforcement, residential facility staff).

If patients meet the testing criteria, please submit the specimen to the State Hygienic Laboratory in accordance with this [guidance](#).

There is no longer a requirement to contact IDPH for testing approval before submission to the State Hygienic Laboratory. Please ensure ONLY specimens from patients meeting the testing criteria are submitted to the State Hygienic Laboratory. The cost of this testing is assigned to the public health system.

### **CEO update calls**

1 pm Wednesdays are our regular calls with hospital CEOs. [Click here](#) to register for the March 25 call.

### **IHA COVID-19 resource webpage**

For current information about COVID-19, visit IHA's [coronavirus resource page](#).

### **Previous IHA Updates on COVID-19**

[March 17 Update](#)

[March 18 Update](#)

[March 19 Update](#)



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