In light of on-going COVID-19 concerns and Governor Hutchinson’s recent State of Emergency Declaration, the Arkansas Department of Health recommends voluntary suspension of all non-emergency or non-urgent care or services to patients until further notice. This recommendation is subject to change at the discretion of the Governor and Secretary of Health.

The Arkansas Department of Health recommends that procedures, testing, and office visits that can be safely postponed should be rescheduled to an appropriate future date. The only care or services to be provided at this time should be emergency or urgent in nature. Postponing treatment for high-risk patients is especially recommended for those who meet any of the following criteria:

- Returned from international travel within the last 14 days
- Present with a fever of ≥100.4°F, cough, shortness of breath or other symptoms of COVID-19
- Aged 65 years and older
- Compromised immune systems and/or chronic disease (American Society of Anesthesiologists Classification (ASA) 2 and above https://www.asahq.org/standards-and-guidelines/asa-physical-status-classification-system)

Universal precautions are to be strictly followed in order to minimize the possibility of disease transmission. Several suggestions follow:

- Remove magazines and children’s toys from waiting room areas to help prevent the spread of the virus through fomites.
- Provide a single sign-in sheet per patient.
- Sanitize digital screens and/or styluses after each patient.
- Sanitize office more frequently.
- Ensure that exam rooms, exam tables, etc., are being sanitized after each patient.
- Instruct patients and staff to practice social distancing in the waiting room.
- Consider having patients wait in their cars instead of the waiting room.

Because patients may present for treatment with an acute respiratory illness of undetermined etiology, it is important to follow standard precautions and the guidance below at all times. We highly recommend that any patient with fever or other respiratory symptoms have their treatment postponed, due to the risk that their symptoms might be due to COVID-19.
Patients with an acute respiratory illness should be identified at check-in and placed in a single-patient room with the door kept closed if they provider chooses to treat them.

Seek to prevent the transmission of respiratory infections in healthcare settings by adhering to respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.

Place a disposable surgical mask on persons with respiratory symptoms, such as coughing.

Provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal.

Ill persons should wear a surgical mask when outside the patient room.

Personnel assessing a patient with influenza-like or other respiratory illness should wear disposable surgical facemask, non-sterile gloves, gown, and eye protection (e.g., goggles) to prevent exposure.

Patient and workers should perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic hand wash) after possible contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

Routine cleaning and disinfection strategies used during influenza season can be applied to the environmental management for COVID-19. More information can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl_environinfection.html

Collective actions taken by the community can help deter the proliferation of the COVID-19 virus in Arkansas. By rescheduling elective procedures, professionals can do their part to prevent community spread, as well as help to preserve the limited supply of personal protective equipment that is critical for frontline healthcare personnel responding to this pandemic.

If you have any questions about this guidance document or about COVID-19, please call the ADH call line for health care providers at 1-844-930-3032.

For the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19 in Arkansas, visit: https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus