

4/20/2020

To our patients:

We continue to monitor a variety of issues regarding COVID-19 on your behalf. In the area of treatment, we have nothing new to report to you. Please rest assured that there are multiple treatments that are being intensively studied by the medical community. This includes prophylactic treatment and treatment options for outpatients, hospitalized and critically ill patients. In this email, we would like to address a couple of issues that have been a source of questions as we move through the flattened peak of our COVID-19 curve:

Masks and Gloves

With the recommendation from the CDC for mask use by the general public, we thought it would be useful to go over some practical suggestions regarding mask use and etiquette. Below you will find a link to CDC information on cloth mask use. Please be advised that the general public should be focused on use of cloth masks rather than medical/surgical masks or N95 masks. Yes, we still have supply chain issues in our local hospitals! All medical masks and N95 masks should continue to be routed to hospital use at this time. Additionally, medical masks and N95 masks are not intended to be reused when it comes to infectious exposures. Hospitals have been working diligently on protocols to help their staff safely reuse these masks given the supply shortages. In normal times, these masks would be single-use and immediately discarded in a hospital in between patients. Healthcare workers are now being highly trained on how to safely reuse this equipment. It is not practical for the general public to safely reuse these types of masks for this purpose. In contrast, a cloth mask can be washed and decontaminated in your washer and dryer at home which makes it safe and easy for you to reuse.

In order to safely place and remove a cloth mask, you should use the guide on the CDC link for mask placement. The mask should cover your nose and chin. Once the mask is secured to your face, you should not remove it or pull it out to speak to someone, to cough or sneeze, or to reposition it. You should treat the external part of your mask as if it is contaminated once you are wearing it in a public space. When you remove the mask, you should be careful to remove it by the ear loops and to not touch your nose, mouth or eyes until you can wash your hands fully. Once you are home, your mask should be washed in hot water before reuse.

There is no recommendation to use gloves when out in public for essential tasks like grocery shopping. Gloves offer a false sense of security, however it is important to understand that once you touch any object, your glove should be considered “contaminated”. If you proceed to touch items in the store, then subsequently touch your phone, keys, purse, wallet, car door handle, and steering wheel, you have just contaminated all those personal surfaces with your gloves! The best thing to do is carry hand sanitizer for use while out in public and use before you touch any personal objects, and then immediately wash your hands with soap and water once you are home.

If you have questions that we can help with, please do not hesitate to let us know!

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Diagnostic Testing

The main locations of testing remain the same: Overlake Redmond Urgent Care with testing coordinated by physician referral and Swedish Issaquah with drive-up testing. There are other testing sites appearing but not all tests are the same. Some testing relies on self-swabbing to collect a specimen and this is typically much less accurate. Some tests are not FDA approved. We are confident of the testing done at the above 2 locations.

Antibody testing

Antibody testing will become increasingly important as we look to incrementally open up sectors of our economy. Knowing if you have immunity is critical if you are going to be in contact with other people. Abbott Labs has very publicly announced that they will be manufacturing 20 million tests. However, their target is at least 6 weeks from now.

As of this update, we do NOT have any antibody tests that are clinically available. We are in close contact with our lab and they are evaluating several manufacturers. As with many things, the details count, and the accuracy of these tests are still being determined. It is important to have confidence that a negative test is truly negative and, even more importantly, that a positive test is truly positive. 4 companies have received FDA approval for testing. Neither have reached production levels that have made them available to us at the clinic level. Many other companies have received FDA approval on an "emergency use" basis. This means that they can bring their product to market if they have any data showing efficacy even though it hasn't been thoroughly tested. Unfortunately, many of these tests are inaccurate and we can't recommend using them since they may mislead you. We will continue to work closely with our lab and monitor the ongoing evaluation of these tests to make them available as soon as possible. We will send an email when we have an accurate reliable test available to us.

As we learn more about COVID-19, there is an increasing volume of information on many different topics. Not surprising, there are a lot of theories, some well-researched information, some misinformation and a lot of premature conclusions. It is frustrating to not have a quick yes/no answer when a new theory is presented. We will continue to carefully follow new developments, research proposed theories and, in collaboration with our medical community, provide you with our recommendations for the best care possible.

Sincerely,

Drs Richard Kaner and Jen Mills

