



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEW GUIDANCE ISSUED TO PROVIDERS ON SAFELY REOPENING OR EXPANDING IN-PERSON HEALTH CARE SERVICES

With new COVID-19 infections dropping, the Health Department offers updated guidance to health care providers on safely reopening certain functions of health care practices, including patient prioritization

New Yorkers who are not at increased risk from COVID-19 are encouraged to donate blood by contacting the New York Blood Center to schedule an appointment

May 29, 2020 —The Health Department today [issued new guidance](#) to New York City providers on restoring certain health care functions during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The health advisory is intended to remind New Yorkers to seek care if needed and for providers to prepare for more patients. The guidance urges providers to prioritize essential medical care for patients at higher risk for poor health outcomes and patients who cannot access telemedicine. The guidance also reminds providers of the added infection control measures and physical distancing precautions that will help ensure the safety of patients and staff and encourage patients to get the in-person care they need.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is having a profound effect on New Yorkers seeking care for serious health conditions not related to the virus,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. “As the city enters into the next phase of the pandemic, we want health care providers citywide to prioritize patients with a higher risk of poor health outcomes when they reopen or expand clinical services.”

Guidance for reopening includes identifying which patients to prioritize for in-person care, including young children due for immunizations, patients who require physical or occupational therapy to prevent functional decline, and patients recently discharged from a hospital or emergency department who require follow-up evaluation.

Providers are advised to balance increased health care access with continued vigilance in physical distancing and use of telephone, telehealth, and electronic communication as much as possible. Added infection control and physical distancing precautions in response to COVID-19 include designated office hours for specific types of patients, staggered in-person appointments, face covering requirements, heightened disinfection practices and COVID-19 symptom screening of staff and visitors.

The Health Department continues to advise providers to urge patients with severe symptoms due to any condition to promptly seek medical care—whether it is related to COVID-19 or another medical condition. Patients who do not have a health care provider can call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or 311. Care is available regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.

New Yorkers are also encouraged to donate blood at this time of critical blood shortage. People who are not at increased risk of complications from COVID-19 can leave home to donate blood. Extra precautions have been put in place to ensure donor safety during the pandemic. Patients who were confirmed to have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 through molecular or antibody testing and have recovered may be eligible to donate plasma.

People interested in donating blood or plasma, can go to the NY Blood Center at nybloodcenter.org or 800-933-2566. Donation is by appointment only.

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