

## REOPENING GUIDANCE

# Outpatient Health Care Facilities

The following is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Green Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

### See also:

[CDC Guidelines for Outpatient and Ambulatory Care Settings](#),  
[PA COVID-19 Information for Health Care Facilities](#).

## Protections Needed

### Masks

- Maintain universal masking and all safety practices from Red Phase.
- Require employees and patients to mask while on site except only as necessary for the employee to eat or drink during break times. The employee should be seated at least 6 feet from others when taking off mask.

### Barriers

- Consider use of plastic barriers between staff, patients, and visitors where appropriate (for example check-in desks).

### Isolate

- Screen every employee for symptoms before every shift and prevent them from remaining on site if they have cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- It is not necessary to conduct on-site temperature measurement for staff. If you measure temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer, and do not allow anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to remain on-site.
- Have sick leave policies in place so that employees excluded from the workplace do not lose earnings.
- If an employee develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in [Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19](#). Required precautions include calling PDPH at 215-685-5488 to report positive cases.

### Distance

- Adjust work assignments to ensure employees can stay 6 feet from each other throughout their shifts when possible.
- Ensure patients in waiting areas can sit at least 6 feet apart.

### Reduce crowds

- Consider changes to appointment scheduling to minimize numbers in waiting areas.

### Handwashing

- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at office entry and outside bathrooms for all staff and visitors with prominent signage promoting use.
- Emphasize importance of hand hygiene between each patient encounter for all staff.

### Clean

- Wipe down high-touch surfaces with disinfectant at least once every 4 hours. See [CDC guidance](#) for details.

### Ventilation

- If possible, increase ventilation in the building by either:
  - Opening windows and/or doors on opposite sides of the building and using fans to blow outside air through the building OR
  - Optimizing ventilation provided by the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system by:
    - Having the HVAC system checked to assure that it is working properly. If it can be adjusted, the system should be set to provide at least 6 air exchanges per hour.
    - Maximizing the amount of outside air circulated by the system.
    - Installing filters with minimum efficiency reporting values (MERV) of 13, or the highest compatible with the filter rack. It is not necessary to use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters or ultraviolet light irradiation systems.
    - Checking that the external air inlet duct is not blocked and that it is at least 15 feet from people.

### Communicate

- Educate staff about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19.
- Have front desk staff hand out masks to all patients who are not already wearing them on arrival.
- Post prominent signs at entrances and in employee break rooms:
  - Asking people who are sick to call to notify staff before entering.
  - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes
  - Mandating physical distancing of at least 6 feet for both patients and staff, including while queuing at check-in desk.
  - Mandating that all staff and patients wear masks.

### Other

- Encourage routine health maintenance and visits for care of chronic conditions, using telemedicine where possible.
- Consider separate “sick” and “well” waiting room areas.
- Separate office hours for sick visits and routine visits to help avoid transmission.
- Promote routine and catch-up immunizations.