What Patients Need to Know About Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Health officials report that coronavirus, the virus that causes COVID-19, has spread worldwide. The virus spreads person-to-person, usually through close (within 6 feet) physical contact with an infected individual or direct contact with a contaminated surface. Uncontained coughing and sneezing also can spread the virus.

Some infected persons will show few symptoms. Others may experience severe respiratory distress. It is not clear at what point infected persons can spread the virus to others.

Coronavirus is currently spreading across the United States. Some states, including New York, California, Illinois, and more have issued "shelter in place" orders to slow the spread of disease. In addition, all persons are encouraged to use social distancing, handwashing, and other measures to reduce their risk of contracting and spreading the virus. Risk of infection is dependent on exposure. Close contacts of persons infected with COVID-19 are at greater risk of exposure.

Health care workers also are at a greater risk for COVID-19. As a result, many hospitals, doctors' offices, and medical care centers are rescheduling non-essential and elective exams and procedures. Contact your doctor's office to confirm any scheduled appointment before you leave your home.

Radiology professionals are at the forefront of COVID-19 care. Doctors may use Chest CT to confirm a diagnosis of viral pneumonia. Radiologists and radiology departments are also taking steps to keep patients safe, maintain capacity during the current health crisis, care for COVID-19 patients, and ensure radiologic care for all who need it. In addition to focusing on essential procedures, they are establishing infection control protocols to clean and sterilize equipment and to screen all patients at facility entrances. Other measures include social distancing within waiting rooms, establishing isolation rooms for suspected infected persons, and restricting hospital visitors.

The complete clinical picture of COVID-19 is still not fully clear. Recognized symptoms for COVID-19 include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. COVID-19 can sometimes cause pneumonia or bronchitis. Infants, older adults, and persons with heart and/or lung disease, weakened immune systems, or diabetes are at greater risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

There is an enormous amount of coronavirus information available on the Internet. Much of this information is false and potentially dangerous. Be sure to only consult trusted, recognized sources of credible information, such as RadiologyInfo.org, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit:

- Pneumonia (RadiologyInfo.org)
- Chest CT (RadiologyInfo.org)
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