

UPDATED PROTOCOL March 19, 2020 to reflect [airborne precautions instituted by CDC](#). Updated items are below in red.

Protocol Update: We are implementing standard SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) screening for each patient visit and interaction provided by Vascular Access Plus, effective March 13, 2020.

Purpose: VA+ staff will make every effort to minimize the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and demonstrate best practices in caring for themselves and their patients. As the situation evolves, we will continue to update you on expectations for safety.

General principles guiding policies, protocols and company decision making:

- A. As nurses, we are at the front line of caring for patients who may have contracted this virus, so early identification and precautions are essential.
- B. As healthcare providers, we are at greater risk of contracting the virus ourselves, and must ensure we minimize potential spread to our patients.
- C. Our response to the global pandemic is guided by evolving information, guidelines and best practice. We will disseminate best practices as professional guidance is updated and passed down from local, state and federal agencies. We believe that open communication and information sharing are crucial to successfully managing our response as a company.

A. Early Identification and Precautions

Patient Screening Protocol:

Pre-screening will be performed on each patient you are called to see in your capacity as a Vascular Access Specialist or Infusion Specialist with VA+.

Infusion Specialists will screen patients prior to traveling to patient's home, and upon arrival if not done within last 24 hours.

Vascular Access Specialists will screen each patient upon arrival to facility and prior to procedure.

The following screening is mandatory. Documentation of screening is mandatory and must be noted in insertion/visit record.

Screening questions:

1. Have you recently traveled to an area with known local spread of COVID--19?
2. Have you come into close contact (within 6 feet) with someone who has a laboratory confirmed COVID--19 diagnosis in the past 14 days?
3. Do you have a fever (greater than 100.4 F or 38.0 C) OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?

If your patient answers yes to any of the questions above, or if you deem that your patient may be at risk of being exposed/infected with SARS-CoV-2 implement the following precautions:

Precautions for Vascular Access Specialists:

1. Remove yourself from the patient's room and immediately implement **airborne precautions**. (See CDC protocols here: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/transmission-based-precautions.html> and attached to this email.)
2. Notify VA+ administrator on call and Charge RN of facility, and follow any guidelines given.
3. During insertion, ensure that patient is masked and that any other persons in the room are masked or asked to leave.
4. After insertion, ultrasound and any equipment that was taken into the room must be thoroughly cleaned with solution/wipes that are effective at killing coronavirus. Additional guidelines for sterilizing equipment may be given by VA+ admin on call or facility.
5. **Please note that the CDC has confirmed that SARS-CoV-2 is spread through contact, droplets, blood, feces and is airborne, especially during aerosol generating procedures. Due to the nature of the sterile procedures we perform and our proximity to patients during procedures, we are implementing airborne precautions including N95 masks during vascular access insertions.**

We will be stocking case and cart with gowns, masks and supplies in the coming week to ensure you have the PPE you need to safely and effectively care for your patients. Note: You will not be issued any N95 masks until you have completed your fit test.

Precautions for Infusion Specialists:

1. Distance yourself at least six feet from the patient and immediately **implement airborne precautions**. (See CDC protocols here: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/transmission-based-precautions.html> and attached to this email.)
2. Notify VA+ administrator on call and follow any guidelines given.
3. If fever >99.5 present in patient, you must call the ordering MD and verify if provider wants infusion to be performed or visit cancelled.
4. During infusion, ensure that patient is masked and that any other persons in the room are masked or asked to leave.
5. Maintain distance of at least six feet for duration of infusion.
6. After infusion, any equipment that was taken into the home must be thoroughly cleaned with solution/wipes that are effective at killing coronavirus. Additional guidelines for sterilizing equipment may be given by VA+ admin on call.

7. Please note that the CDC has confirmed that SARS-CoV-2 is spread through contact, droplets, blood, feces and is airborne, especially during aerosol generating procedures. Due to the immunocompromised nature of our patients, **we are implementing airborne precautions including N95 masks during infusions in the home.**

Infusion nurses, you will be receiving gowns, masks and additional supplies in the coming weeks to ensure you have the PPE you need to safely and effectively care for your patients. Note: We cannot issue nurses any N95s until you have completed your fit test.

B. Minimizing Spread to our Patients

As health care workers, we are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 in the normal course of our business and are obligated to minimize the potential for spread among our patient population, many of whom are immunocompromised.

Each of us should already be using standard precautions during all interactions with patients, and using sterile technique in the course of those activities that require it.

Some additional guidelines to follow include:

- Self monitoring for s/s of illness daily, **including daily temperature monitoring.**
- Limiting travel to areas with known local spread of SARS-CoV-2 when possible.
- **Self masking with surgical mask when any active cough present, and when in any facility or home visit. Best practice is to change surgical mask between facilities and patients as supply allow.**
- Refrain from patient care if active fever >100 present.
- Maintain distance of six feet whenever possible during patient interactions.
- Limit the amount of equipment/belongings you take into patient home/room/facility.
- Wipe down any equipment that was taken into the home, patient room or facility between patients and visits.
- **Do not use shared items, aka pens, thermometer, etc when being screened at facilities without disinfecting them yourself.**
- **After shift, immediately disrobe and launder clothing and shower.**
- **Minimize contact and implement social distancing with family members as you are able.**

C. Maintaining Open Communication and Information Sharing

Again, we understand that the situation related to this pandemic is continually evolving and we will make every effort to ensure we keep our employees and our patients up to date. Conversely, as you are made aware of restrictions, infection rates and actions taken by your state and local leadership, we welcome updates from you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out at any time with questions or concerns. We are grateful for you and want to reiterate that all of the above is laid out to ensure that we can keep you as healthy as possible during this time.

Many thanks and blessings to you and yours.

Vascular Access Plus Administration