

Banner Health COVID-19 update in Arizona

PHOENIX (Nov. 10, 2020) – More than 10 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19. A million of those cases have been reported in the last 10 days alone. Nearly every state in the country is now experiencing uncontrollable spread of the virus. Here in Arizona we have seen gradual increases in case counts, hospitalizations, ICU beds in use and ventilators in use. Predictive models indicate that Arizona could soon experience exponential growth of the virus if efforts are not taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Capacity

Currently Banner Health's Arizona hospitals have adequate capacity to care for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients. We are constantly monitoring hospitalization data in real time as well as looking at predictive modeling tools to guide our decisions around increasing bed capacity.

Staffing

Banner Health, like many other health care systems in the country, is working to secure the necessary staff to respond to the second COVID-19 surge. We utilize a predictive modeling tool to determine staffing needs. In late summer the tool accurately predicted our staffing needs for mid-November, and as a result we have been able to staff up to meet the current demand. During a typical winter, we need approximately 1,000 additional nurses to care for seasonal patient volume. We expect that number to double due to COVID-19. We are working closely with our contract staffing agencies to secure these out-of-state workers. We anticipate that this will be very challenging given the national demand as the entire country surges. For this reason, Banner has also upskilled more than 900 team members. This means that we train a team member from another unit or area of the hospital in the skills necessary to care for patients in an intensive care unit (ICU). These upskilled workers support the existing ICU team, allowing us to safely use our experienced critical care nurses to cover more patients while still providing safe and appropriate care.

Supplies

Banner Health's inventory of supplies is adequate with no shortages to report at this time. Last week Banner distributed to its 30 acute care hospitals 700,000 reusable pocket procedure masks to be worn by staff who work in medium-risk environments such as non-COVID-19 in-patient units. Recognizing that there will be ongoing supply chain disruption for personal protection equipment such as masks, this product was produced by Banner Health through a collaboration with Banner Innovation Group and Gateway Group. The masks are launderable with pockets for disposable filters. The design was tested in-house with feedback gathered by many frontline workers to ensure that the quality, fit and comfort were just right.

Testing

The number of people seeking COVID-19 testing at Banner's drive-thru location at the Arizona State Fairgrounds last week was up by 46% over the previous week. Banner's site provides testing for those with COVID-19 symptoms or concerns of exposure. Appointments are required by calling 1-844-549-1851 or [scheduling online](#). Banner currently has capacity to perform 3,600 tests per week and can scale up with increased demand.

Elective Surgery

Banner Health is currently performing elective surgeries. These surgeries are medically necessary, and we will continue to provide this service to the community as long as we have the capacity and resources to do so. We have a process and criteria in place to make changes, as needed.

Medications

Banner Health has an adequate supply of medications used to treat in-patients with COVID-19, including Propofol, Dexamethasone and Remdesivir. Yesterday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration [issued an emergency use authorization](#) for the investigational monoclonal antibody therapy bamlanivimab for the outpatient treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients. Our internal team of experts is creating a plan to provide this treatment once it becomes available to us.

COVID-19 Vaccine

Banner Health has worked diligently in recent months to prepare for the possible distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine. We have a plan in place and meet regularly with local health officials about vaccine distribution. It is still unclear when a vaccine would be approved for use or be distributed. Banner Health will independently validate the safety and efficacy of the vaccine before it is administered. We will not make vaccines mandatory for team members initially, nor will we eliminate requirements in our facilities for masking, social distancing and other safety protocols. "We see the vaccine as one additional layer of protection. It's not a replacement for the safety measures we've perfected at our facilities," said Dr. Marjorie Bessel, chief clinical officer for Banner Health.

We ask for the community's continued support as we fight this deadly virus. Please keep yourself, your families, members of your community and our health care workers safe by reducing the spread of COVID-19. As the positivity rate in Arizona rises, so does the risk to our health care workers who are members of the community. They are also our community's most important asset during this pandemic. Please protect them and reduce the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Wearing a mask
- Putting at least 6 feet of distance between you and others
- Avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people
- Washing your hands frequently
- Wiping down high-touch surfaces
- Staying home if you're ill, except to receive medical care

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<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/covidupdate1110>