



## COVID-19: Re-Opening Your Practice to Patients & Staff

Below are key things to consider as your practice makes plans to re-open for onsite visits. To help create a thorough plan for re-opening, including financial and administrative tips, etc., please see the **Practice Re-Opening Toolbox** included in this tip sheet. NC AHEC Practice Coaches are available to assist you with your re-opening plan.

### Scheduling & Screening

- Ease into a full schedule. Don't schedule all patients as onsite visits at first. But, be mindful of payer termination dates for expanded telehealth coverage!
- Create standard workflows and scripts for scheduling of onsite vs telehealth visits, patient communication, and follow-up.
- Block part of the schedule for onsite sick visits (ex: allocate well visits for mornings, and sick visits for afternoons.)
- Set aside one session or day of week for vaccination catch-up only.
- Have a screening process for patients calling in and requesting a same day appointment.
- Employ a triage station outside of normal office flow, such as outside the main entrance. This can include an area to screen patients, visitors, and staff for respiratory symptoms and checking temperature.
- Use NC HealthConnex to view COVID-19 test results or COVID-19 related procedures or reports prior to a patient's appointment.

### Physical distancing

- Keep common areas, such as waiting rooms, closed. Allow patients to check in remotely or by telephone and wait in their car until the exam room is ready.
- If necessary to open the waiting room, arrange it in a way to encourage patients to remain at least six feet apart.
- Limit or prohibit visitors.
- Consider a plexiglass barrier between front desk staff and patients.
- Be mindful of physical spacing for staff (e.g., breakroom, workstations).

### Cleaning & Disinfecting

- Ensure exam rooms are cleaned and disinfected after each patient per CDC guidelines (see **Practice Re-Opening Toolbox** for guidelines).
- Ensure all common areas (e.g. waiting room, staff break room) and shared equipment are cleaned and disinfected per CDC guidelines.
- Dedicate certain rooms/pods as "sick rooms" and only use those rooms for patients presenting with COVID-19 symptoms.

### Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Ensure you have enough PPE (facemasks, gowns, eye protection, and gloves). A 30-day supply is optimal.
- Require patients, visitors, and staff to wear masks regardless of reason for visit. For patients, cloth face coverings suffice.
- Have hand hygiene supplies available for patient use.
- Make sure you have the necessary cleaning and disinfecting supplies on hand.

### Maximize the use of telehealth.

- Use a telehealth platform that is HIPAA compliant and that can be interfaced (at least in part) to your EHR. A Practice Support coach can help you with this transition.
- Evaluate what is going well and what isn't with telehealth visits. Use data and feedback from claims, staff, providers, and patients to aide in decision making.



## Practice Re-Opening Toolbox

### Guides & Checklists

- CMS — [Re-opening Facilities to Provide Non-Emergent Non-COVID-19 Healthcare: Phase 1](#)
- MGMA — [Practice Reopening Checklist](#)
- Curi — [Getting Back to Business Toolkit](#)
- AMA — [COVID-19: A Physician Practice Guide to Reopening](#)
- AAFP — [A Checklist for Reopening Your Practice for “Non-Essential” Face-to-Face Visits](#)
- NC AHEC — [Tip Sheets of Telehealth, Coding, & Financial Resources](#)
- NC HIEA/NC HealthConnex — [COVID-19 Portal Quick Reference Guide](#)

### Webinars

- MGMA — [Webinar Recording: Planning for Post COVID-19 Practice Startup](#)
- NC AHEC and NC DHHS — [Webinar Recording: Charting a New Course Moving Forward as Restrictions Ease](#)

### Patient Consent

- Curi — [New Consent Forms \(for visits during COVID-19\)](#)

### Cleaning & Disinfecting

- CDC — [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)

### Requesting PPE

- NC DHHS — [Requesting Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- CCNC and NC AHEC — [What to Do if You Need PPE, CCNC and NC AHEC](#)
- Local resources may be available. For more information, contact your NC AHEC Practice Support coach.

***Please contact NC AHEC Practice Support for further assistance with any of these topics.***

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