

Banner Health COVID-19 update in Colorado

Update provides info on visitor restrictions, capacity, staffing

GREELEY (Nov. 18, 2020) – Nearly 11 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19. The country has averaged more than 148,000 new cases a day for the past seven days. Colorado has had exponential growth of COVID-19. Hospitalizations across the state have increased by 500% over the past 10 weeks. Several neighboring states' hospitals are at capacity.

Visitation Restrictions

To create a safe and secure environment for our patients and our health care workers during the COVID-19 outbreak, visitors will no longer be allowed **in any Banner Health locations in Colorado**. This change occurred Monday, November 16. This includes outpatient and ambulatory locations, such as: clinics, urgent cares, imaging centers, surgery centers and occupational health services locations. We understand this will be challenging, but we're committed to take the necessary precautions to protect our patients, health care workers and the community. Information about visitation policies can be found at [bannerhealth.com](https://www.bannerhealth.com).

Capacity

Currently Banner Health's Colorado 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. In recent weeks we have seen an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations as well as non-COVID-19 hospitalizations. At this time there are no dominant patient diagnoses for these non-COVID-19 patients. Diagnoses include things like chronic diseases, strokes, trauma, surgery and heart attack. Very few patients are hospitalized in ICUs due to scheduled surgeries, as most surgeries do not require ICU stays.

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 are working closely with our contract staffing agencies to secure out-of-state workers but anticipate that this will be very challenging given the national demand across the country.

For this reason, Banner has also upskilled nearly 1,000 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.

Testing

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Banner leaders partnered to identify the most critical patient populations to test based on capacity and supplies available and clinical needs. These processes are continually evaluated with considerations given to operational needs, expanded services and government regulations. The testing process follows a tiered approach that looks at the percent of positive COVID-19 cases and the reproductive rate of the virus in a community.

Because Northern Colorado has a case rate above 10% and reproductive rate above 1.0, **Banner will expand testing to all patients in acute care hospitals in Northern Colorado**. Testing these additional patient populations will help provide information needed to ensure we are able to put the measures in place to keep patients and team members safe. Additionally, this information provides data and insight into the pandemic overall.

For community members who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have concerns of exposure, Banner offers testing at multiple locations in Northern. Call 1-844-549-1856 to find the nearest appropriate Banner location for testing. Banner Urgent Care locations, open 7:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. 7 days a week, also offer testing for those who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

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 including moving procedures to another Banner hospital in Northern Colorado.

Medications

Banner Health has an adequate supply of medications used to treat in-patients with COVID-19, including Propofol, Dexamethasone and Remdesivir. Last week, 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. The treatment is now available to us and our internal team of experts is creating a process for how to administer it.

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 Colorado 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 with others outside your immediate household
- Washing your hands frequently
- Wiping down high-touch surfaces
- Staying home if you're ill, except to receive medical care

<https://stage.mediaroom.com/bannerhealth/COVID-19colo>