

Banner Health COVID-19 update in Arizona

State's largest health system weighs in on latest news

PHOENIX (Oct. 27, 2020) – COVID-19 is spreading at its fastest rate since June. This past month in Arizona we have seen gradual increases in case counts, hospitalizations, ICU beds in use and ventilators in use. If these trends continue, we could meet or exceed the number of COVID-19 patients that we saw during Arizona's surge in June and July. This is concerning as Arizona hospitals will also be caring for a higher number of non-COVID-19 patients as we do every winter with the resurgence of other respiratory illnesses.

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 determine if or when we will need to increase capacity. As COVID-19 hospitalizations have increased in recent weeks, we have started to reopen some of our respiratory cohort units that had closed after the June and July surge.

Staffing

All staffing needs are being met at this time through our full-time workforce and part-time labor available through Banner Staffing Services and contractors. In addition, a multi-disciplinary team at Banner has developed a predictive modeling tool that will help to determine staffing needs in the future. The tool utilizes data from the prior COVID-19 surge as well as historical data of visitor trends, respiratory illnesses and other more seasonal factors that might impact volume. We are using this tool as we work closely with our contract staffing vendors to secure the help we will need for an anticipated increase in volume.

Supplies

Banner Health's inventory of supplies is adequate with no shortages to report at this time. This includes all personal protection equipment (PPE) used by health care workers. Banner Health still has a safe and effective N95 reuse policy in place to preserve its supply of N95 masks, as there is an international shortage of this mask type. In addition, Banner established a sustainable supply of many other PPE items during the first COVID-19 surge, including [reusable gowns](#), Banner-produced [procedure masks](#) and [3D-printed face shields](#).

Testing

We have more than 4,000 available appointments per week at our drive-thru COVID-19 testing location at the Arizona State Fairgrounds for those with COVID-19 symptoms or concerns of exposure. Appointments are required by calling 1-844-549-1851 or [scheduling online](#). Currently we are booking about 25% of those appointments.

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.

Visitor Restrictions

Banner Health currently has [visitor restrictions](#) in place at all locations where health care services are provided. We will make a one-time exception to these visitor restrictions to accommodate emergency absentee voting for patients who are hospitalized and unable to vote by mail. Patients will need to arrange this through the election office of the county where they are a registered voter. One to two visitors (designated by county election departments) will be permitted to visit patients to deliver, witness and collect ballots. These visitors must also pass a health screening and are required to mask for the duration of the visit.

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