



Cleaning Protocol

One of the most important ways to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus is thorough and frequent cleaning of surfaces. COVID-19 spreads from person to person contact from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. Through frequent cleaning of surfaces, we can limit potential exposure to the droplets that can cause COVID-19.

American Senior Communities has implemented enhanced housekeeping procedures to ensure a clean and sanitized environment. All housekeeping personnel are educated daily on infection control practices and cleaning strategies. Each housekeeper uses specialized, CDC approved disinfectant to kill the virus on surfaces. High touch areas like light switches, doorknobs and call lights are sanitized multiple times per day by several team members as well. A Quality Assurance tool is used to validate the enhanced housekeeping procedures are being followed for every room and common area.

Employee Screening

One important strategy to minimizing exposure of COVID-19 is to both limit the number of people who enter the nursing center and rigorously screen those who do enter. American Senior Communities has limited who is permitted to enter nursing centers for several weeks. Visitors, delivery services, entertainers and volunteers have all been asked to delay their visits to our communities in order to limit potential exposure to our residents. In addition to limiting who can enter, we also screen employees and medical providers before they enter the resident areas of our nursing centers.

Employees are screened each day before they begin their work. That assessment includes a questionnaire about respiratory symptoms, potential exposure and travel history. Each employee also has their temperature taken before working. Any employee who has a temperature or triggers assessment concerns are not permitted to work. For those who have concerns with their screening, American Senior Communities is offering a Personal Leave of Absence to protect both residents and our employees. All employees are given personal protective equipment when they report to work such as a mask, gloves, gowns, etc.

Activities for Residents

We realize that these changes in the daily routine and visitation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to be stressful for our residents. Our employees are going above and beyond to continue to create meaningful moments with our residents every day. Activities are still an important part of quality of life, so activities have been modified with physical distancing and infection control strategies in mind.

Group activities have been reimagined to smaller groups or hallway led activities. Our Activity Departments have been so creative in their efforts! From conducting BINGO from the hallway, leading exercises and even dance contests; our activity professionals are continuing to prioritize wellness and engagement while upholding social distancing and infection control.

Employees are also ensuring residents have items they enjoy in their rooms for more independent activity pursuits. So many entertainers, museums and technology-based activity platforms have shared their content with us. Activity professionals have access to music from the Great American Songbook, virtual museum tours, games, concerts and more to share with our residents. Each resident's individual preferences are considered for ways to meaningfully engage them in activities they can enjoy either in their rooms or in modified group settings.

Treatment/Recovery Data

There is currently no FDA approved treatment for COVID-19 so coordination with local, state and federal infection teams is critical to beating this disease. Our Senior VP of Medical Affairs, Dr. Chelo Pinon has been working closely with the Indiana State Department of Health on CDC guidelines to provide the latest COVID-19 medical care. The coordination allows us to stay up to date on current treatment options and strategies.

Our Director of Pharmacy is regularly communicating with the local hospitals to share treatment successes and medical trials. We are coordinating efforts to maintain symptom control and reduce the severity of the disease. Symptoms of COVID-19 vary from mild (more like a common cold) to more severe. Just as symptoms vary, so do treatment options. This coordination allows the most current treatment information to our Medical Directors and physicians.

As the number of new cases in Indiana decline, we are looking toward care of residents as they recover from illness. Data shows that most people diagnosed with COVID-19 recover. Part of our treatment is supporting those residents as they recover from this illness. Working with residents to stay hydrated, nourished and comfortable as they recover is part of the next phase of our treatment plans.

Dining Program

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 the Culinary Department has put extra precautions in place above our normal food safety procedures. For communities without a diagnosed COVID case, the dining rooms are limited to only those residents who need additional assistance with their meals. These residents are brought to the dining rooms and are seated at a minimum of 6 feet apart. All employees assisting these residents are using additional hand hygiene while providing the needed assistance. All salt and pepper shakers and bottled condiments have been removed from the dining rooms and individual servings are being offered. In a building with a positive COVID case, all dining rooms are closed and residents are provided assistance in their rooms. In order to meet the need of all residents requiring assistance, we have trained additional staff to be dining assistants.

The dish washers we use in our kitchens provide adequate sanitizing to kill many viruses and bacteria including the COVID-19 virus. As an additional precaution, all residents diagnosed with COVID-19 are being served using paper plates, cups and utensils that will be thrown away on the COVID unit to help contain the virus.

Another way we are working to prevent the virus from entering our communities is by limiting access to our kitchens by outside vendors. Many of our food deliveries are being made outside and boxes are being wiped down with a sanitizing solution prior to storage.

Safety is of the utmost concern but so are the nutritional needs and satisfaction of our residents. The Culinary and Activity departments are working together, utilizing snack carts which are being pushed from room to room. Residents can choose from a variety of their favorite snacks and beverages which not only helps to improve nutrition and hydration but also brightens their day.

Communication With my Loved One

Upholding guidance from the CDC and CMS regarding the precautions to limit the exposure of COVID-19 to our residents, temporary visitor restriction and social distancing have been put into place. These restrictions can understandably cause anxiety to residents, families and loved ones. But meaningful connections continue, just in a different way.

One of the ways to keep connected is the “old fashioned” way. Sending cards, letters, or photographs through the mail or dropping these off in the CARE Containers outside each community is a great way to communicate with your loved one. Employees are available to both deliver the letters and read them to the resident if they require assistance. You can share stories from your week or send a child’s art projects. Asking questions about your loved one’s life is also a fun way to exchange letters and information you might have always been curious about. Questions about what their life was like when they were young or favorite stories of your childhood can be enjoyable for both you and your loved one.

Phone calls are also a familiar way to communicate with your loved one and share stories about your family or talk about a new recipe you've cooked or TV show you've watched. You can also use technology to stay more connected. Platforms like FaceTime, Skype and Zoom are all great options so you and your loved can see each other's faces. These platforms can be used on any device with a camera feature: smart phones, tablets, home computers with web cam or a laptop. If you would like to assistance setting these communications up, let Social Services or your loved one's CARE Companion know.

We know that there is no substitute for an in person visit. We are collaborating closely with the Indiana State Department of Health and the CDC to determine when we are able to lift our temporary visitor restriction and will inform you soon as that decision is made.

Psychosocial Wellness

We realize that these changes in the daily routine and visitation have the potential to be stressful for our residents. Our employees are going above and beyond to continue to create meaningful moments with our residents every day. From conducting BINGO from the hallway to leading sing-alongs, our activity professionals are continuing to prioritize wellness and engagement while upholding social distancing and infection control. Employees are also ensuring residents have items they enjoy in their rooms for more independent activity pursuits.

In addition to this engagement, each resident is being monitored for indications of stress daily. All employees have been educated on what potential indications of distress include. Things like changes in sleeping or eating patterns, irritability, sadness and withdraw from others are just a few of the indications that staff assess each time they interact with a resident. In cases when these symptoms are noted, social services, along with the interdisciplinary team, work in conjunction with the physician to develop a plan of care to address the concerns. This might include changes in the resident's daily routine, how often they communicate with their loved ones or might include counseling services. Counseling services are available via Telehealth technology to avoid in person exposure.

We know that there the temporary restrictions on visitors can contribute to feelings of stress for both our residents and their families. We are collaborating closely with the Indiana State Department of Health and the CDC to determine when we can lift our temporary visitor restriction and will inform you soon as that decision is made.

If you notice signs of stress in your loved one, please reach out to our team immediately. The Social Services Director or Executive Director can help in discussing your observations and developing a plan for further assessment.

How and When Testing Occurs

Testing for COVID-19 is an important step in the treatment and containment of the virus. At the onset of the pandemic, COVID-19 testing was not as available as in recent weeks. Medical directors and physicians are now able to more strategically determine who should undergo testing. Testing is conducted by using a nasal swab which is then sent to a laboratory.

The first determination of testing involves residents or employees exhibiting symptoms of the illness. Both residents and employees are monitored daily for an elevated temperature and respiratory issues like coughing and shortness of breath. If there are symptoms of COVID-19, the resident is placed in enhanced infection control status and tested. Employees are immediately sent home so testing can be conducted.

The second type of testing is based on known exposure to a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. As soon as a positive case is determined, an activity known as “contact tracing” begins. This tracing helps determine the number of people who potentially had contact with the person diagnosed who could have been exposed to the virus.

Sometimes after contact tracing is completed, it becomes clear that the potential exposure of residents and employees warrants blanket testing. In this type of testing, every resident is tested regardless of symptoms or exposure.

Testing allows some measures of containment, by moving residents who are negative for COVID-19 away from others who may be positive. Since some residents who are tested may not have symptoms of the virus, treatment options are reviewed individually by health care providers.

Involvement of Medical Director and Physicians

Each of our communities employs a physician to serve as Medical Director. This doctor helps to guide medical policies and treatments in the community. From the early days of this illness, our medical directors in each community have worked tirelessly with their local hospital directors, ASC’s Senior VP of Medical Affairs and ASC’s Director of Pharmacy to stay current with the latest COVID-19 treatment studies. Our physicians are involved in the daily monitoring and symptom treatment of all suspected and COVID positive residents.

Our caring and compassionate medical directors utilize the information provided by the infectious disease specialists in their area and CDC studies to treat every resident individually. These medical professionals are focusing on the risks and health of each unique person to minimize symptoms, support recovery and prevent known COVID-19 related complications.

How to Manage Stress/Emotions

This unusual time in both healthcare and the world certainly can cause anxiety, fear and stress. Emotional tolls of stress might include feelings of anger and irritability, racing thoughts or constant worry. Some may feel down or depressed. Stress can also cause physical symptoms such as insomnia, upset stomach, aches and pains and feeling fatigued.

While we help observe for and support signs of stress in our residents, we also want you to be aware of the tolls this situation might be taking on your own wellbeing. Uncertainties about your loved one, seeing news stories every day, and managing your own safety all contribute to stress and anxiety.

We wanted to share some ways that may help in managing these uncertainties.

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body.
 - Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate.
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - Exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Speak to your doctor if you feel your stress is becoming unmanageable or you feel you need help coping with your emotions.