

July 23rd SAVAHCS Tele Town Hall

Website Q &A

Q: How do you determine who you call for the Town Hall and how many people are on?

A: We pull a random list of 15,000 telephone numbers we have on file to make outbound calls. Additionally, we market the town hall using our social media pages and Tip of the Week email.

Q: If you get tested negative, do I need to get tested to go do errands?

A: Testing for COVID-19 information can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>

Q: Goes to SE clinic and are they open for appts right now?

A: The Southeast Clinic is open for appointments. You may be offered various modalities such as an in-person, video, or telephone appointment. Please contact your Southeast Clinic PACT team to schedule an appointment at 520-664-1831.

Q: Are we supposed to get a yearly physical to keep our VA status active?

A: No, you do not need a yearly physical. However, if you feel you need a checkup, please contact your PACT team.

Q: Is it possible to eradicate COVID?

A: Currently there is research underway to develop a vaccine. The National Institutes of Health under the Department of Health and Human Services has updated information which can be accessed at <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-launches-clinical-trials-network-test-covid-19-vaccines-other-prevention-tools>

Q: Is it okay for people that are hard of hearing to remove their masks to ask a question?

A: There are clear face coverings available on the market and at the SAVAHCS for patients who are hard of hearing. The CDCs face mask fact sheet can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

Q: Tried to get a COVID test and had to go to Tucson to check himself in the ER. When will it be easier like a drive through?

A: Currently we do not have this option. However, there are several locations throughout Southern Arizona offering drive through services. Please click on the following links:

<https://www.bannerhealth.com/patients/patient-resources/covid-19/testing>

<https://www.elrio.org/covid19/>

Q: Are the plastic face masks available through the VA?

A: Yes, although we encourage you to bring your own face covering, we do have plastic face coverings for patients that need them for their clinical appointments.

Q: How many people at SAVAHCS have COVID cases and what is the ratio to the total capacity SAVAHCS can handle?

A: As of August 12th, we have 47 COVID beds and 107 non-COVID beds. There is a VA webpage that tracks numbers of COVID-19 cases by VA facility across the Nation; it is updated multiple times a day, and you can check it out at

<https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>

Q: I am a positive case in Tucson, are you doing anything to get better testing?

A: The SAVAHCS laboratory performs diagnostic testing/molecular testing for COVID-19 (SARS COV-2) utilizing the Roche and Cepheid analyzers. In addition, we perform antibody testing utilizing the DiaSorin analyzer.

Q: How many employees have contracted the virus?

A: Approximately 7% of employees have contracted the virus.

Q: What type of COVID test does the VA do? How much actual testing is being done with all the staff at the VA?

A: The SAVAHCS laboratory performs diagnostic testing/molecular testing for COVID-19 (SARS COV-2) utilizing the Roche and Cepheid analyzers. In addition, we perform antibody testing utilizing the DiaSorin analyzer.

We offer symptomatic and asymptomatic testing.

Q: Is there any expectations for a vaccination? Does the VA have preference?

A: Efforts are underway to find a vaccine. The National Institutes of Health under the Department of Health and Human Services has updated information which can be accessed at <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-launches-clinical-trials-network-test-covid-19-vaccines-other-prevention-tools>

Q: Will video appointments still be available?

A; We encourage the use of several modalities such as video connect and telephone appointments to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Q: Where can I find demographic COVID information?

A: There is a VA webpage that tracks numbers of COVID-19 cases by VA facility across the Nation; it is updated multiple times a day, and you can check it out at

<https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>. Additionally, you can view the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) COVID-19 data dashboard [HERE](#)

Q: I drive my husband to the VA and have to sit outside in the heat. Is there any way myself and people like me can be accommodated? It's too hot.

A: For the safety of our patient and staff, we are currently not allowing visitors on campus.

Q: If we need to travel from state to state, is it easy to link up w another VA if we need to?

A: Yes, we have a traveling Veteran coordinator available to assist you. Please contact your PACT team for assistance.

Q: Is the VA taking in other patients that are strictly COVID only?

A: In support of VA's Fourth Mission to improve the nation's preparedness for response to national emergencies, the SAVAHCS is engaging with the State of Arizona to assist in handling COVID-19 cases throughout Southern Arizona. VA has authorized SAVAHCS, based on availability of beds, to care for up to ten non-Veterans to support community hospitals across southern Arizona.

Q: Once pandemic calms down, will you still consider keeping the video teleconference for people who feel more comfortable with that?

A: Yes, we will continue to offer several modalities such as video connect or telephone appointments. We encourage you to discuss these options with your PACT team.

Q: Is the VA doing COVID testing?

A: The SAVAHCS laboratory performs diagnostic testing/molecular testing for COVID-19 (SARS COV-2) utilizing the Roche and Cepheid

analyzers. In addition, we perform antibody testing utilizing the DiaSorin analyzer.

Q: How do I get treated if I get sick?

A: Please contact your PACT team or you can call the VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Nurse Advice Line at 1 (877) 252-4866.

Q: Can I get testing at the VA?

A: the SAVAHCS offers symptomatic and asymptomatic (through your PACT team) testing.

Q: How many COVID cases are being dealt with at Tucson hospital right now?

A: Hospital census changes on a daily basis. However, there is a VA webpage that tracks overall numbers of COVID-19 cases by VA facility across the Nation; it is updated multiple times a day, and you can check it out at

<https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>

Q: Can we go to the main campus for hearing aids?

A: Currently we are scheduling limited appointments in Audiology. Please contact them at (520) 792-1450.

Q: Are the specialty clinic taking any appts? I am concerned about my knees and back.

A: Specialty appointments are available by video or in-person as clinically indicated. Please contact your specialty provider.

Q: Is there a high death and infection rate in the vet hospital? Should we be worried about going in?

A: Safety is our number one priority and we have taken precautions if you present with symptoms. We encourage you to use a virtual appointment (either video or telephone). However, that decision is between you and your provider. Please contact your PACT team.

Q: Do Vets have priority have preference for beds in hospitals for any reason.

A: We prioritize Veteran care needs and are currently offering humanitarian beds when available.

Q: How is the 20 assisted living patients who come down to Tucson working out?

A: We received 19 Community Living Center patients from the Phoenix VA to assist them in their COVID-19 surge.

Q: With less appointments, why is it so hard to get return phone calls from the different clinics?

A: We apologize for your experience. While we are seeing less in-person patients, we are still conducting many appointments through video and telephone.

Q: Are all the patients with COVID 19 veterans or have you taken overflow from other hospitals?

A: In support of VA's Fourth Mission to improve the nation's preparedness for response to national emergencies, the SAVAHCS is engaging with the State of Arizona to assist in handling COVID-19 cases throughout Southern Arizona. VA has authorized SAVAHCS, based on availability of beds, to care for up to ten non-Veterans to support community hospitals across southern Arizona.

Q: 'For those of us with COPD issues, can we use a full-face shield in lieu of a cloth mask?' Is there a way to find your care team info online (MyHealtheVet)?'

A: There are several types of cloth face coverings available. If you prefer, during your visit, we can offer you a surgical face covering.

Your care team is available if you have an authenticated MyHealthVet account, or you may call the Primary Care office at (520) 792-1450.

Q: 'What are the criteria for opening up the next phase of care at the VA and how close are we to achieving it?'

A: We monitor the current situation very closely. The timing of opening up additional services is dependent upon Southern Arizona's COVID-19 activity.

Q: 'Why is there varying opinions on the science of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Who do we get accurate information from?' Is Social Distancing a medical constructive approach?

A: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact in the United States. The best location for information is the CDC website found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Q: I received a phone call where someone fraudulently identified themselves as a VA doctor. Is there a procedure available for reporting this?'

A: We encourage you to contact your local authorities to report any suspected fraud.

Q: If a Veteran has a concern during a procedure or exam, the provider or tech removes their mask and prior to starting procedure there is no hand washing. Is there anything or place for an anonymous feedback concern?

A: If you have any safety concerns, please contact our patient safety office at (520) 792-1450 Ext. 1-4404 or patient advocate office at (520) 629-4933.

Q: If you are not a caregiver but have medical power of attorney, are you allowed to accompany a veteran patient?

A: Currently we are allowing only caregivers to accompany a Veteran patient. However, if you have a unique circumstance, please discuss this with your PACT team.

Q: How many Veterans at SAVAHCS have died from COVID and how many are involved in the testing program for a vaccine?

A: There is no current vaccine testing at SAVAHCS. For the most recent information, please visit

<https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org/>

Q: What if a Veteran feels they need a coronavirus test due to possible exposure? I tried yesterday and it felt as though I couldn't get a test unless my symptoms were very severe as in, I should already be in hospital? Will there be some sort of transcript of this town hall? Some of us have to report this meeting to our VSOs.

A: We encourage you to contact your PACT team or the VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Nurse Advice Line at 1 (877) 252-4866 to discuss your concerns about testing. While there will not be a transcript available, we have shared our responses on our website.

Q: Is the orthopedic clinic open and available for elective surgery such as shoulder replacement?

A: We are currently not doing elective surgeries. However, emergent surgeries are being conducted. We hope to start offering elective surgeries in the near future.

Q: Is the VA actively treating COVID patients? (ie: if I contract Covid-19 will the VA treat me?)

A: We currently treat COVID and non-COVID patients. For more information regarding COVID cases at VA facilities, please visit

<https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>
[ary.](#)

Q: Are campus shuttles running?' When I have an appt for lab tests, why can basic vitals be taken (blood pressure, oxygen level, pulse, etc.) in preparation for an upcoming telehealth PCP visit?

A: Yes, shuttles are running. Currently, Veterans must enter from Building 80 or Building 50 North. We currently do not do vitals in our outpatient laboratory. For your specific concerns, please contact your PACT team.

Q: During routine lab work appointment is COVID-19 testing also accomplished?

A: COVID testing is not accomplished during routine labs.

Q: Are annual mammograms and pap smears being performed?

A: Yes, both annual mammograms and pap smears are being performed. For more information, please contact our Women's Health Services at 520-792-1450 ext. 1-5498.

Q: I had one of my elective surgeries canceled. How do I go about getting rescheduled?

A: The SAVAHCS staff will be rescheduling once we start performing elective surgeries.

Q: Is COVID testing available at the VA for someone without symptoms?'

A: Asymptomatic patients can discuss the need for COVID testing with their PACT team. Additionally, there are several locations throughout Southern Arizona offering drive through services. Please click on the following links: <https://www.bannerhealth.com/patients/patient-resources/covid-19/testing>

<https://www.elrio.org/covid19/>

Q: Since my appointments are by phone or telehealth, how about sending test results being discussed and follow up with a written summary of the instructions given? What is your turn around on COVID testing?

A: Most records are available on MyHealthVet or you could use MyHealthVet to securely message your provider for post-visit instructions.

Currently most test results are returned within 24 hours.

Q: At the screening stations, they do not want to let me go with my brother who is totally dependent on my caregiving including operating a power chair. Why do they make it so difficult? Some are rude. I call the clinic so I can go with my patient.

A: We apologize for your experience. Currently, we are allowing 1 caregiver (18 and older) to accompany a patient if needed for their care.

Q: What is the sequence of steps to help when a person does get COVID-19? What are the meds that should be stocked to assist recovery from COVID-19?

A: If you test positive for COVID, your care team will conduct routine follow up to assist you. If you have questions, please contact your PACT team.

Q: Where can we acquire affordable and effective masks for public use? Online is too expensive.

A: Pima County's website offers information on where to obtain a face covering. The website can be found at <https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?pageId=563362>

Q: I've been canceled once. So, are you doing eye exams?

A: In respond to the COVID surge, we had to cancel several routine eye exams. However, we are currently offering some availability in our eye clinic. Please contact our eye clinic at (520) 629-4606 for more information.