

Road To Reopening: Talking Points

Seeking medical care:

- It's important that people continue to seek care during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those with pre-existing or chronic conditions that need follow-up attention.
- Because of stay-at-home measures and fear of catching COVID-19, people may be hesitant to visit the doctor's office, an urgent care clinic or the emergency room. It's important to know that you can safely seek medical care and protect yourself.
- Not getting care – particularly for chronic illnesses, and urgent or emergency conditions – puts people at high risk for complications later.
- Hospitals have safety precautions and infection control measures in place that apply to every patient and health care worker.
- Because hospitals are isolating COVID-19 patients from other patients, and have rigorous screening procedures and strict visitor policies in place, the risk of contracting the virus in the hospital is low.
- You should call 911 or go straight to the ER for any of these serious symptoms:
 - acute chest pain
 - shortness of breath
 - fainting
 - muscle weakness
 - difficulty speaking
 - changes in vision
 - acute headache or severe abdominal pain that does not resolve in a few hours
- Delaying care and treatment can cause complications and lead to long-term health problems.
- It is important that people feel safe to resume medical care they may have delayed because of the pandemic. This includes diagnostic procedures such as colonoscopies, mammograms, biopsies, etc., and medically necessary surgeries such as joint replacements, hernia repairs, etc.

Financial issues:

- The response to COVID-19 is causing financial pain to Missouri's hospitals. As the COVID-19 virus began to spread throughout the U.S., hospitals stopped providing elective and most outpatient procedures. This was done to protect patients and hospital workers from infection, conserve critical supplies of personal protective equipment, and make beds available to deal with the expected surge of COVID-19 patients.
- As a result, Missouri hospitals' inpatient revenues have dropped by 40% and outpatient revenues by 60%. This amounts to an aggregate loss of \$32 million a day in revenue, or nearly \$1 billion per month, for the state's hospitals.
- The COVID-19 emergency has harmed the state's economy, but hospitals have been particularly hard hit. Their revenues have plummeted. Many of them have seen their expenses increase, as they have reconfigured operations to prepare for the surge of COVID-19 patients, while maintaining their 24 hours a day, 7 days a week schedule of operations.
- With that combination, Missouri hospitals struggle with financial shortfalls ranging from daunting to dire. While the federal government has begun to distribute some financial relief — for which Missouri hospitals are deeply appreciative — its effect is temporary in staving off projected cutbacks in staffing and services.