



COVID-19 Customer Service Scripting

Healthcare providers are shifting resources to address the growing number of cases of COVID-19, also commonly referred to as “the coronavirus,” in the United States. This is affecting the provision of previously scheduled services, the availability of unscheduled care, and the overall patient experience. The following scripting is intended to be used by customer service call center staff or by any revenue cycle staff member, such as a registrar, who interacts with patients and their families during what the World Health Organization has deemed a pandemic.

This resource includes general responses to patients’ frequently asked questions but should be modified as needed based on an organization’s response strategy and volume of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The template responses should not be considered medical advice, and staff should encourage patients to seek a medical opinion when necessary. However, patients will be confused by and concerned about the spread of COVID-19, and revenue cycle staff are in a unique position to educate and reassure patients and their families, acting as a crucial resource for their communities.

Q: *How do I know if I have COVID-19?*

A: The severity of symptoms can vary if you are infected with COVID-19. They generally appear within two to 14 days of exposure and include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. If you suspect you have COVID-19 or are concerned that you have been exposed, please call our hotline at [PHONE NUMBER] between the hours of [HOURS] for more detailed clinical information than I’m able to share with you, including a medical opinion on whether you should be tested and, if so, how to receive that test.

Q: *How can I avoid getting or spreading COVID-19?*

A: We recommend practicing social distancing regardless of whether you feel sick. This means staying home, avoiding large gatherings, and limiting in-home visitors. If you do interact with others in person, you should stand at least six feet apart. You should regularly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and disinfect surfaces you frequently touch. If you use hand sanitizer, it should be at least 60% alcohol. You also should avoid touching your face and cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Certain groups are at higher risk of infection, including people with chronic conditions or lung disease, compromised immune systems, or over age 60.

Q: *I feel sick and think it’s COVID-19. How do I get tested?*

If testing is available: If you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19, please call our screening hotline at [PHONE NUMBER] to talk with a nurse. They will be able to ask you the right questions to determine whether you should be tested for COVID-19, and if so, they will be able to give you details about where and when the test would be performed. Please do not go to one of our urgent care centers or emergency departments without calling that hotline; it is likely that they are performing tests in other areas of our health system in order to limit exposure to other patients, and I would not want you to go to the wrong place.

If testing is not available: We are not currently able to perform any COVID-19 testing. If you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19, please contact [CLOSEST FACILITY KNOWN TO BE PROVIDING TESTS]. If your symptoms are severe and you require treatment, please do not go to one of our urgent care centers or emergency departments without first calling our hotline at [PHONE NUMBER] so we can prepare to meet your needs while maintaining the health and safety of others who are receiving treatment.

Q: *Will I still be able to have my scheduled service?*

If services are generally proceeding as scheduled: We are currently trying to stay on schedule as much as possible. Your service is still scheduled for [DATE/TIME] with [CLINICIAN]. However, if you feel ill or suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19, we ask that you tell your clinician and work with us to reschedule care that can safely be postponed. If anything changes on our end, and your care will need to be postponed, we will call you directly to reschedule.

If services are being rescheduled: To protect your health and safety, and that of our community, we are currently rescheduling some nonurgent services. If this impacts any appointments you had scheduled, we will call you directly to reschedule.

If services are being shifted to telehealth: We are currently trying to stay on schedule as much as possible. However, to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect your health and safety, we are conducting virtual visits whenever possible. For your service at [DATE/TIME] with [CLINICIAN], please [TELEHEALTH ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS]

Q: I was supposed to schedule a service but had not done it yet. Can I still schedule it now?

If scheduling is not suspended: Yes, we are still scheduling services as normal, though it is possible your care team will share details on additional precautions you should take to protect your health during this time. If anything changes and your care will need to be postponed, we will call you to reschedule.

If scheduling is partially suspended: We are still scheduling services, though we have adjusted operations slightly for your safety. For example, we are not currently scheduling [SERVICES]. We are still scheduling [SERVICES] but only providing them at [FACILITY], and we ask that you call [PHONE NUMBER] for a quick virtual screening before arriving for your treatment. If anything changes and your care will need to be postponed, we will call you to reschedule.

If scheduling is suspended: At this time, we are not immediately scheduling nonurgent or nonemergent services. We are doing this to be able to focus on providing the best quality care to patients exposed to COVID-19, which will limit its spread in our community and help keep you and your family healthy.

Q: I am due to deliver/scheduled for a C-section soon. Will COVID-19 affect me or my baby during delivery and our inpatient stay? Are we at risk while I'm pregnant? Should I limit visitors once we get home?

A: You should take normal precautions such as frequent hand washing and social distancing to avoid contracting the virus, and while the CDC believes the additional risk to pregnancy is low, your physician will need to answer any questions about how COVID-19 could affect your delivery or your baby. You should continue social distancing precautions once you return home with your new baby. *[If relevant, also share how visitation will be restricted during hospitalization.]*

Q: I am hurt/feel sick but don't think I have COVID-19. Should I go to the emergency department/urgent care/my physician's office?

If services are not limited: Our urgent care centers and emergency departments remain open for medically necessary, unscheduled care, as always, including injuries or illnesses other than COVID-19. *[Also share any precautions being taken, such as if patients will need to present at a specific entry point, will be met at the door by a clinician to be escorted to a waiting area or exam room, or should call prior to presenting for care].*

If services are limited: Our urgent care centers, emergency departments, and physician offices are open, but we are taking precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19. We ask that you call [NUMBER] so your symptoms can be screened virtually before you arrive for care.

Q: My friend/family member is in the hospital. Can I come visit them?

If visitation is fully restricted: We ask that you don't. We understand that you want to see your friend/family member, but to limit the chances of COVID-19 spreading in our community, it is in your best interest to practice social distancing and only come to one of our facilities if in need of necessary healthcare services. We are not allowing any visitation for the time being, but you are welcome to visit your friend/family member virtually, such as through a video call using personal cell phones. Remember, this is only temporary, until we can ensure that we are not contributing to the spread of the virus.

If visitors are only allowed in rare circumstances: To protect your health, we are currently only allowing visitors for a small number of patients, including *[type of patient, such as maternity or end-of-life care patients]*. It is likely that you'll be asked to speak briefly with a nurse before beginning your visit. The nurse will ask questions about your health and take your temperature to ensure you are healthy and would not be placed at risk by visiting your friend/family member. You also are welcome to visit your friend/family member virtually, such as through a video call using personal cell phones. Remember, this is only temporary, until we can ensure that we are not contributing to the spread of the virus.

If visitation is generally allowed but partially restricted: We are currently limiting visitation to [facility, unit, etc.], but if your friend/family member is being treated elsewhere, you are welcome to visit. However, we are asking that individuals in certain groups (such as those over age 60 or under 18, or those who are at a higher risk for infection due to preexisting health concerns) continue to practice social distancing for their own health and remain at home. It is likely that you'll be asked to speak briefly with a nurse before beginning your visit. The nurse will ask questions about your health and take your temperature to ensure you are healthy and would not be placed at risk by visiting your friend/family member. You also are welcome to visit your friend/family member virtually, such as through a video call using personal cell phones. Remember, this is only temporary, until we can ensure that we are not contributing to the spread of the virus.

If visitation is not restricted: You are welcome to visit your friend/family member, but we are asking that individuals in certain groups (such as those over age 60 or under 18, or those who are at a higher risk for infection due to preexisting health concerns) continue to practice social distancing for their own health and remain at home. It is likely that you'll be asked to speak briefly with a nurse, however, before beginning your visit. The nurse will ask questions about your health and take your temperature to ensure you are healthy and would not be placed at risk by visiting your friend/family member. We are also limiting the number of visitors per patient to [NUMBER] at a time. You also are welcome to visit your friend/family member virtually, such as through a video call using personal cell phones.

Q: If I need a COVID-19 test or treatment, will my insurer cover it? How much will I still have to pay?

A: Currently, there is not a specific treatment for COVID-19. Instead, our healthcare teams will do everything they can to treat the specific symptoms you have, and it is possible you will be able to recover at home with plenty of rest and fluids. If you do require a COVID-19 test, hospitalization, or outpatient treatment, your costs and whether your insurer will reimburse will depend on your insurance plan. You may be able to contact your plan for specific details, but I would also be happy to connect you with our financial counselors to talk more about possible costs for any upcoming care you expect to receive, as well as our financial assistance options.

Q: If I need a COVID-19 test or treatment, how much will that cost? I don't have insurance.

A: Currently, there is not a specific treatment for COVID-19. Instead, our healthcare teams will do everything they can to treat the specific symptoms you have, and it is possible you will be able to recover at home with plenty of rest and fluids. Your costs will vary depending on the care you receive, such as if you obtain outpatient treatment or require hospitalization. I would be happy to connect you with our financial counselors to talk more about possible costs for any upcoming care you expect to receive, as well as our financial assistance options.

Q: Can I still pay my bills in person?

If customer service offices are open to the public: Yes, our walk-in offices are open from [HOURS].

If customer service offices are closed to the public: Our walk-in offices are temporarily closed to help protect your health. You can pay your bill over the phone at [PHONE NUMBER] or online at [WEBSITE]. If you need any assistance or have questions, you can call our customer service team at [PHONE NUMBER] or email them at [EMAIL].

Q: Can I still request medical records in person?

If medical records offices are open to the public: Yes, our walk-in offices are open from [HOURS].

If medical records offices are closed to the public: Our walk-in offices are temporarily closed to help protect your health. You can request medical records over the phone at [PHONE NUMBER], by emailing [EMAIL], or online at [WEBSITE]. If you need any assistance or have questions, you can call our customer service team at [PHONE NUMBER].