

Newsletter  
Spring 2020



An alliance dedicated to enhancing the health and lives of those we serve

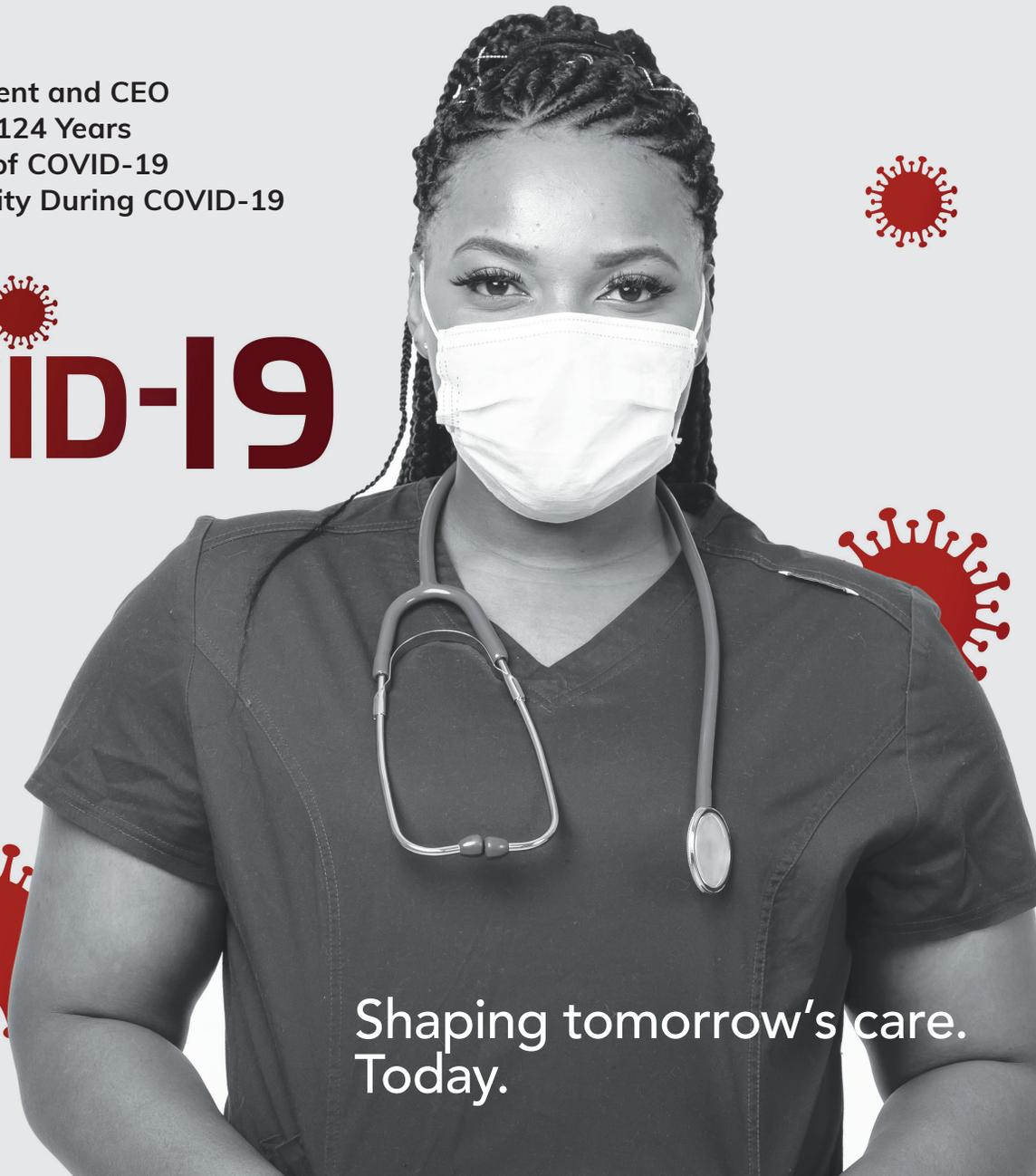
# COVID-19

VNA | Visiting Nurse Association  
Easterseals Nebraska

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  **COVID-19**



Shaping tomorrow's care.  
Today.

# From VNA President and CEO, James Summerfelt



James C. Summerfelt, M.Ed., MSPT, President and CEO

As an organization, our preparation for COVID-19 began months and even years ago. We invested in people, policies, procedures, accreditation, and education; and because of that, we're facing a pandemic from a position of strength.

The essence of crisis is the unknown. No one really knew how to fight the invisible COVID-19 monster until it began to attack close to home. But our foundation was solid because our staff, managers, leadership team, and board of directors did the tough work ahead of time. And we have responded to this crisis with expertise, energy, and grace. I'm proud of that!

**We've approached the unknown with experience and education.**

**We've approached a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) with resourcefulness.**

**We've approached fear with communication and training.**

**We've approached the need for social distancing with creative telehealth options.**

**We've approached social isolation with collaboration and teamwork.**

**We've approached crisis with compassionate care.**

When I worked for the Chicago VNA in the 1980's, I had patients with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). We did not know much about how the disease was transmitted and we didn't have all the PPE or in-depth instructions about universal precautions to the extent our employees have today. I knew I was at risk because we didn't know exactly how the disease was spread. I was afraid for patients who were dying and for the families caring for them. It was a scary time for the public and for caregivers alike. But today we are better equipped because of the lessons learned from HIV/AIDS. As healthcare has advanced, so have our policies, our staff, and our quality of care.

VNA is proud to be part of the solution; a foundation that was established 124 years ago continues to provide compassionate and innovative care. In the midst of uncertainty, you can be certain we're here for you and your community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C. Summerfelt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# Healthcare Experts for 124 years

Our mission began in 1896. We've cared for men, women, and children in this community, teaching wellness, treating illness, and battling diseases like the polio epidemic, Spanish Influenza, HIV/AIDS, and H1N1.

We serve the sick and dying. The rich and poor. The insured and uninsured.

EVERYONE – no matter their station in life or ability to pay – receives the highest quality healthcare, support, and compassion.

In the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic, you can rely on 124 years of expertise. Our staff is trained to assure your safety and ours – in home healthcare, hospice, pharmacy, shelter nursing, and parenting programs.

VNA - Proud to serve you!



Safely serving our  
community today.

# What You Can do if You are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19

## Are You at Higher Risk for Severe Illness?



Based on what we know now, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are:

- People aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility

People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:

- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised
  - Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications.
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

## Here's What You Can do to Help Protect Yourself



**Stay home** if possible.



**Wash your hands** often.



**Avoid close contact** (6 feet, which is about two arm lengths) with people who are sick.



**Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces.



**Avoid all cruise travel** and non-essential air travel.

Call your healthcare professional if you are sick.

For more information on steps you can take to protect yourself, see CDC's [How to Protect Yourself](#).



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[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IS NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S JOB – IT'S EVERYONE'S JOB

We all hear the same things: wash your hands, don't touch your face, stay at home, stay 6 feet away from others. So, what is the best way to protect yourself and others?

## MASKS:

- Wear a mask when you are in “exposure” zones (mainly places with other people).
- Treat your home, car, and yard as safe places (no mask or gloves).
- Be on high alert on what you are doing with your hands when you are in exposure zones. **This is when you must not touch your face.**
- Remove your mask when you return to your safe place.
- Wash your hands **every single time** you take off your mask or move from an exposure zone back to a safe zone.
- When you are at home and **after washing up**, you can relax, scratch your nose, rub your eyes and floss your teeth...without worry.
- If you work with the public, you should absolutely be wearing a mask on the job.
- If you are going to put the same mask on and off, then treat the outside as contaminated and the inside as safe.
- If you handle the outside of your mask, then consider your hands as contaminated, and wash them.
- Have at least two masks so one can be in the wash and the other clean when needed.

***Your nose reduces the risk of viral particles getting to your throat. A mask reduces the risk of the viral particles getting to your nose, and social distancing reduces the risk of them getting to your mask. Together, these countermeasures work very well.***

## Any mask has 3 main protective properties:

1. They make it hard to touch your nose and mouth, thus providing great protection for what is the biggest infection vector in most situations -- hand-to-face transmission.
2. They reduce the exposure of your nose and mouth to viruses in the ambient air (directly breathing in viral spray or viral fog).
3. They reduce the chance that others will get infected from you when you are sick and don't know it (and when you are sick and do know it!).

## HAND WASHING:

- Washing with soap is better than using a sanitizer or wipes, but obviously you need a sink and soap for washing.
- Wash or sanitize your hands **every single time** you enter your safe zone, and when you finish working on things that have a chance of being contaminated.
- For example, if you are going to do the laundry, get everything loaded in the washing machine and then wash your hands. Same for unpacking the mail, or groceries, or an Amazon package delivery.
- While you are working on anything that is potentially contaminated, and every time you are in an unsafe environment, pay attention to your hands.
- When you are shopping or in other exposure zones, it is not the time to scratch your nose or rub your eyes. And you should be wearing a mask anyway.
- Once you are back in your safe zone, wash up, and scratch your nose and rub your eyes all you want. You are in your safe place.
- Keep a pump or wipes in your car and at your home entrance to do a quick job on the way into your safe zones—mainly to keep your safe zone safe.
- If you accidentally shake someone's hand, or touch something worrisome, keep track of your hands, and keep them off of your face until you can wash or sanitize them.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING:

- Staying six feet from people is a good thing. Ten feet is even better.
- No non-essential errands and no social gatherings. Respect the ten-person limit.
- Shop alone and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
- Socially distance your work. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
- Help kids follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports. And no playgrounds.
- Help seniors stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.

# Caring for the Community During COVID-19



## Home Healthcare:

VNA is caring for confirmed COVID-19 patients, suspected COVID positive patients, and any other patients in need of skilled nursing, medical social work, therapy, or home health aide. Care is delivered in the home - the least costly, most independent and preferred setting for healthcare.



## Hospice:

End-of-life care that provides dignity, relief from symptoms, spiritual and emotional support, and comfort through the end of life. VNA also offers palliative care for those experiencing a life-threatening condition but do not meet hospice admission criteria (often because they are receiving curative treatment).



## Pharmacy:

VNA is one of the area's largest providers of IV therapy in the home. Our pharmacists are working hard to assure patients receive prescribed infusion medications in the comfort and privacy of their homes.



## Bereavement:

VNA Hospice is leading a community bereavement initiative, providing support for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and those with grief needs not related to the pandemic.



## Parenting Support:

VNA provides home visitation for vulnerable women, children and families by public health nurses, social workers and parent coaches that enhance mother and infant/child health, quality of life, school readiness and family economic self-sufficiency.



## Shelter Nursing:

VNA nurses are in every domestic violence and homeless shelter in Omaha and Council Bluffs, providing frontline healthcare, making referrals to community partners, and guiding shelter staff in appropriate safety measures and quarantine options during the pandemic.



## HIPAA Compliant Virtual Visits:

Telehealth technology allows VNA to monitor patients on a daily basis and detect health complications before they become a crisis. Telehealth units provide daily COVID-19 symptom surveys; include CDC and WHO video education on prevention and handwashing best practices; and transmit vital signs (including pulse oximetry) to a nurse.



COVID-19 has impacted our nation and our community in ways both known and unknown. Caring for patients and assuring everyone's safety during the pandemic has created unexpected expenses for equipment and supplies. Rising levels of unemployment has created rising levels of uninsured people who are referred to VNA.

**Your support makes a difference, and we are grateful. Donations can be made:**

- Using the enclosed **remittance envelope**
- **Online** at [www.vnatoday.org/donate](http://www.vnatoday.org/donate)
- During **Omaha Gives** – a one-day community-wide giving day that supports nonprofit organizations. VNA's Board of Directors is setting up a matching fund that effectively doubles your donation. Find out more and donate to VNA on **May 20** by going to [www.omahagives.org/VNAtoday](http://www.omahagives.org/VNAtoday)

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**OMAHA GIVES!**

*powered by the Omaha Community Foundation*

**Omaha Gives • May 20**

# PREVENTION OF COVID-19

1 WASH



AVOID

2

3 COVER



CLEAN

4

5 DON'T TOUCH



vna Visiting Nurse Association

SEEK HELP

6