



Media Release

Region 6 Healthcare Coalition

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Letter to Region 6 Communities

The health care systems within Region 6 are at a tipping point - our individual and collective resources are being overwhelmed, and we need our communities' help to get back on track. For all Michigan Region 6 care providers, the health and well-being of our patients, their families, our communities, and our team members are our top priority.

The hospitals and EMS systems in our region are operating at extremely high capacity - and have been for weeks. While other areas of the country have seen the number of patients with COVID-19 decline, our numbers are on the rise. We are also seeing more patients with other serious health issues that cannot be further delayed or ignored.

How does that impact you?

- Wait times for emergency, urgent or primary care may be much longer than usual
- Ambulance transfers may be delayed
- Surgeries or procedures may be deferred to a later date
- Visitor restrictions remain in effect
- You may have a prolonged stay in the emergency department waiting for a bed in the hospital

Similar to other industries in the region, state and across the country, we are also experiencing staffing challenges. Our team members are exhausted and are doing their very best care for our communities.

It is important to note that the strain on our system is due to the COVID-19 response, plus the many other demands our teams are facing to care for seriously ill patients. If more people were vaccinated, that would help reduce the number of COVID-19 patients, as most of the COVID-19 patients in the ED and admitted remain unvaccinated. This is impacting our ability to care for those who are seriously injured in a car accident, suffer a heart attack, stroke, or experience another medical emergency or issue. We are concerned there will be a surge of influenza along with the current COVID-19 surge adding to the capacity issues. We strongly urge people to get the influenza vaccine as well.

Please utilize your primary care office for minor or non-emergent problems. Urgent care is also available for non-emergent needs. If you have an emergency, please call 911 or go to the emergency department as soon as possible. During the prior surge some people waited too long because they did not want to burden the emergency department. Unfortunately, some of those people came too late to treat their emergent condition such as stroke, heart attack or diabetic emergency. Please be patient with our staff in the hospital as everyone is doing all they can to care for a large number of patients.

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Everyone can pitch in to help. We're pleading with our community members to do everything they can to avoid COVID-19 and lead a healthy lifestyle:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccination or booster if you are eligible
- Get children 5-18 a Covid-19 vaccination
- Wash your hands frequently
- Wear a mask when in indoor public spaces or outdoors when unable to socially distance
- Practice healthy behaviors such as socially distancing, getting good sleep, eating well and exercising.

We know that together we can get through this safely, but we need your help. Thank you for your support and patience as we navigate through these challenges.

Jerry Evans, MD, MMM, FACEP
Medical Director
Region 6 Healthcare Coalition
In cooperation with Region 6 Hospitals and EMS agencies

Region 6: Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Ottawa

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