

Emory Radiology and COVID-19

Almost as soon as COVID-19 was detected in the U.S., Emory Healthcare and Emory University swiftly implemented protocols to save lives and prevent infection spread. How and where we work may have changed, but our commitment to you and to our patients has not. In fact, the changes wrought by the pandemic have resulted in lasting improvements to all aspects of our operations.

REDEFINING THE WORKPLACE

Immediately transitioning to remote working and learning not only limited virus transmission, it also freed space to be reconfigured as needed for COVID care. Emory Radiology has redefined the workplace to maintain productivity, connectivity, and the highest quality patient care.

Offsite Imaging Interpretation: PACS workstations have been deployed so faculty whose subspecialties do not involve direct patient contact can interpret imaging studies offsite.

Flexible Scheduling: Faculty and staff can exercise flexible scheduling to support important family obligations such as children at home attending school remotely and caring for vulnerable elder family members.

Distanced Onsite Workspaces: The department has decreased workstation density and improved ventilation in reading rooms and break areas to reduce virus transmission.

SAFELY PROVIDING CLINICAL CARE

Clinical operations leaders worked with Emory Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control to reconfigure processes to protect patients and employees, leveraging Lean and EmPower principles already driving departmental care transformation. These include the following:

- Protocols for sanitizing imaging equipment and facilities and for donning/doffing personal protective equipment (PPE) for all imaging modalities;
- Rooms with negative air flow for COVID+ patients undergoing IR, neuro-IR, and CT-guided procedures with standardized protocols for PPE use and infection prevention;
- Protocols for responding to patient codes with minimal personnel and providing stocked supply carts with PPE for responding personnel;
- Ample stockpiles of PPE and other supplies needed to minimize infection spread;
- Electronic modality screening forms available online so patients can arrive imaging-ready;
- Scheduling additional length of time per imaging study to minimize traffic in waiting areas and to accommodate disinfection protocols;
- Expanded hours of outpatient imaging operation to nights and weekends to accommodate sanitizing procedures between patients; and
- Clinical and hospital access limited to patients and one adult if a patient cannot self-advocate.

SAFELY TRAINING RESIDENTS, FELLOWS AND STUDENTS

Faculty have pivoted to online platforms to teach and train remotely whenever possible. Emory provides substantial digital resources and training for faculty to support online teaching and training. Emory Radiology also has implemented protective measures so clinical training for residents, fellows, and medical imaging students can continue in Emory hospitals and clinics.

ENSURING CAMPUS SAFETY: EMORY FORWARD

The Emory Forward website provides guidelines for maintaining a safe learning and working environment. In addition to rules regarding strict social distancing and limited indoor gatherings, mandatory mask-wearing, and frequent cleaning and disinfecting work and common areas, Emory also provides the following to protect employees:

COVID Mandatory Onboarding Process: All faculty, staff, trainees, and students must complete a mandatory onboarding process—which includes agreeing to the Emory Community Compact—in order to gain access to campus. Faculty whose responsibilities do not require campus presence continue to work remotely. Onboarding also includes online training, a confidential health screening questionnaire, providing emergency contact information, and providing a baseline list of close contacts for contact tracing.

COVID Vaccination: Emory health care workers including physicians, advance practice providers, nurses, technologists, therapists, clinical researchers, and staff over 65 years old can schedule appointments to receive the two-dose COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID Testing: Emory is providing three types of COVID-19 testing: onboarding testing for all new faculty and staff and those returning to on-campus duty, asymptomatic screening (mandatory for students and optional for faculty), and diagnostic testing when exposed or symptomatic.

PROMOTING WELLNESS

Emory Radiology is dedicated to fostering the well-being of its faculty, staff, and trainees. The Emory Radiology Wellness Committee has curated an online library of resources to help you deal with the emotional and physical pressures resulting from the pandemic.

Emory University Human Resources additionally offers resources to help faculty and staff generally with positive work-life integration, and more specifically with the challenges of Working Through COVID-19, with guidance on the following:

- Emotional Health
- Fitness/Nutrition
- Financial Concerns
- Leave Options
- Child Care
- Spiritual Support
- Legal Affairs
- Technology

COVID RESEARCH

Emory is deeply involved in clinical and primary research, including vaccine development, to treat and prevent COVID-19. Our Radiology faculty are leveraging imaging and machine learning expertise to speed diagnosis and treatment. Emory can quickly translate research from bench to bedside because of its outstanding researchers and facilities, which include the Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Consortium.