

PAA July 20 Update: COVID-19

Hello PAA patients! As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an emotional and stressful time for everyone. We feel honored that you have entrusted us to care for your children and we appreciate your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times.

At PAA, our goal has always been, and will continue to be, to provide professional, evidence-based pediatric care for our patients. We want you to know that we will strive to continue this despite the many challenges that COVID-19 presents to all of us. We have made many changes in our office to keep our patients safe and will continue to adjust depending on the ever-changing conditions that COVID-19 presents to our community.

Another important aspect of providing you with the best care possible is keeping our providers and staff safe from COVID-19. Wearing masks and other protective gear when interacting with our patients is very important. What is also very important, and where you can help us, is good communication between our staff and you, our patient families. Your careful answers to screening questions are essential to helping us care for your children in the most safe and efficient manner. **When discussing evaluation and treatment plans, whether on the phone or in person, please keep in mind that we all have the same goal-providing the best, evidence-based care for your child.**

Unfortunately, we have received some unprofessional and aggressive communications concerning expectations about clinical decisions. Please keep in mind that we continue to have limited COVID-19 testing resources at our office. We hope that will change soon and we are working hard to get more testing at our office. Until we do, we are doing our best to be judicious stewards of limited resources and allocate them appropriately. We hope you understand that we are also frustrated with the limited testing available to us right now. The doctors and staff all appreciate your patience and understanding as we all grow and learn through these trying times.

On a more personal note, the doctors and staff would like to thank all of you who have reached out and thanked us for our efforts. Despite the risks that doing our profession entails, we all really love our jobs and we are all passionate about providing the best care possible for your children.

Some informational updates.....

New online COVID assessment tool:

Click on this link from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to answer questions about your child's exposure to and symptoms of COVID-19: <https://covid-choa.mybluemix.net/dashboard?view=chat>. This is a GREAT tool and it mirrors the advice we would give to a parent calling with these concerns and questions.

Website updates:

With what seems like daily changes in our world due to COVID-19, we are trying to provide our families with the most up to date information. Because we all access information best in different ways, we wanted to share the avenues we post pertinent information so that you can get updates on the platform that's best for you. On the COVID-19 tab on our website, you'll find newsletters and provider videos pertaining to COVID-19: <https://www.pediatricassociates.net/contents/covid-19/for-more-information-on-covid-19>, Additionally, we try to post most of this content on our Facebook page as well; please follow us on Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/www.pediatricassociates.net> For those who use Instagram; follow us on Instagram @pediatricassociatesofaustin.

COVID-19 Testing: General Information

1. PCR and rapid antigen testing for current infection

PCR testing requires nasopharyngeal secretions obtained via a q-tip passed through the nostril, until resistance is met, at the back of the posterior nasopharynx. The swab is then rotated several times. Test duration is approximately 15 seconds.

As of 7/20/20 – **we continue to have EXTREMELY LIMITED test supply.** We realize this is frustrating and we share your frustration with lack of test availability. We do not yet have rapid antigen testing and can only perform the PCR test on those who meet extremely specific criteria. We cannot test those with symptoms who have a family member at home with COVID. In these instances, we assume COVID is present, and negative or positive test results would not change any guidance we would offer. The PCR test is sent to an outside laboratory and results are received in 2-7 days. **These tests do have a chance of false negative results; to minimize that we encourage our patients to do testing after day 4 of symptoms.** Please do not request testing prior to that time. For those who would like to be tested, for whom we cannot test at PAA, we recommend reaching out to Austin Public Health for other testing sites: https://covid19.austintexas.gov/s/?language=en_US

Our lab is currently in the process of obtaining a rapid COVID-19 antigen test, which can be done at PAA and will provide results within minutes, rather than days. This test cannot be charged to insurance and patients will be required to pay out of pocket if this testing is desired. We will be able to offer testing to many more patients once we receive this new test. A future newsletter will let you know when we have this capability.

2. Antibody testing for past infection

This type of test relies on serology and detects antibodies against the virus, which shows a past infection. While information is changing daily, as of today, these tests have not been widely approved for children, nor is it clear whether a positive result indicates active infection, lasting immunity, or other clinically relevant information. We are not performing or recommending serology testing at this time.

Thoughts on our kids attending in-person school this fall:

Like everything else in the world today, there is still a lot of uncertainty with returning to school in the fall. We realize school will look different for each child and family. General information is available from multiple sources (see links below). Specific guidance, however, will depend on what each family feels is best for their specific situation. We will have more updates about school recommendations when they become available.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>
- <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2020/06/26/schoolreopening062620>
- <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2020/05/22/peds.2020-1576.full.pdf>
- <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa450>
- <https://primaryimmune.org/video/children-covid-19-back-school-idf-forum-june-23-2020>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>