



# CORONAVIRUS

## UPDATE

CDC

## COVID-19 Update, 3\20

March 20, 2020 | [ARKMED.org/covid19](https://arkmed.org/covid19)

### Status Update as of 3\20, from ADH Website:

- Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in Arkansas - 96
  - Arkansas Department of Health Lab positive test results - 58
  - Commercial lab positive test results - 38
- Persons Under Investigation (PUI) - 203
- Persons being monitored by ADH because of an identified risk - 548
- Past PUIs with negative test results - 351
  - Arkansas Department of Health Lab negative test results - 247
  - Commercial Lab negative test results - 104

### Limited supplies of PPE

The Arkansas Department of Health has made some changes within their Emergency Operations unit to set aside 6% of PPE stockpile for private clinics. Until the supply chain catches up with the demand, this is a very limited amount of PPE.

However, you can put in a request by emailing [adh.eoc.logistics@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.eoc.logistics@arkansas.gov). **Specify what PPE you need and in what quantities.** You are also urged to go to the Health Department website for guidance on how to best utilize PPE in order to extend the usable life of N-95 masks and other equipment.

### More on Telemedicine

AMS is receiving multiple calls each day regarding what carriers are and are not allowing in light of COVID-19. We will be working on matrix to help understand and hopefully will have that ready in another day or two. For now, see below for a summary.

### COVID-19 COVERAGE Provisions for Telephone-Only:

- **Medicaid:** Services can be provided by telephone-only provided they meet the criteria for the service. Use regular visit codes along with a GT modifier and Place of Service 02. We suggest good documentation for both the visit billed and the time spent.

- **ABCBS:** Telephone only visits are payable under three “new” codes based upon time. Again, document the times. These codes are:
  - 99441 (5-10 minutes)
  - 99442 (11-20 minutes)
  - 99443 (21-30 minutes)
    - *Please note, these codes are for established patients only that have not been seen 7 days prior to the call and will not be seen within 24 hours after the call.*
    - [Click here to read the entire BCBS Telephone Policy Update here.](#)
- **United:** United currently only allows telephone only for “virtual check-in” codes. These are not the same as office visits.
- **Medicare:** Medicare has relaxed the requirement for the originating site and that can now be the patient’s home. Medicare currently allows you to bill just as you would for in-person visits provided the technology is both audio and video (i.e. smartphone with Facetime would be acceptable). The only telephone-only codes allowed are the “virtual check-in codes”.

**TECHNOLOGY** – The Office of Civil Rights has relaxed the HIPAA compliant technology requirements so that tools such as FaceTime and Skype can now be used.

**EXISTING TELEMEDICINE RULES** – Do not forget that Arkansas law already requires all insured plans, including Medicaid, Arkansas Works and State Employee plans to cover services provided via telemedicine technology. Why is this important? For those health plans that are not allowing office and other visits such as medication management visits to be billed when using “telephone-only”, if you provide the service using other telemedicine communication technologies you can still bill for that service. The information below applies to coverage for telemedicine services according to Arkansas statute:

- The originating site is defined as wherever the patient is located, including the home.
- Does not include telephone only, FAX, texting, or email
- Health plans must cover AND provide reimbursement for services provided via telemedicine on the same basis as in-person visits and reimbursement can be no less than it would have been under an in-person visit.
- The service provided via telemedicine must be comparable to what would have been provided in person. Example: make sure your documentation supports the billed CPT code such as a 99213.
- The health plan cannot prohibit a physician (provider) from directly billing a patient for a telephone-only visit that would not otherwise be covered by the carrier.
- Under the relaxed rules from the Office of Civil Rights, we understand that, for now, real-time audio and video would include Facetime and Skype. Again, documentation is important.

## Price Gouging at Commercial Labs

AMS has received a few calls about price gouging from medical supply vendors and out-of-state labs. The Arkansas Attorney General’s office intends to vigorously pursue prosecution of these bad actors.

Generally a 10% or more increase in price over the pre-emergency price is considered price gouging. [See the information from the AG’s office.](#)

## Medicaid Reimbursement for Lab Tests

DHS has issued a memo to medicaid providers regarding reimbursements of COVID-19 diagnostic testing. [Click here to read the memo.](#)

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## Economic Development Resources for Your Practice

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has created a resource page for businesses and employees financially impacted by COVID-19. There are state quick action loans, community development block grants, and unemployment resources available to assist you and your employees should you need to temporarily close your practice.

Visit [arkansasedc.com/covid19](https://arkansasedc.com/covid19) for a complete list of resources.

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## Got Questions? Let Us Help.

The Arkansas Medical Society is here to serve our physician members and their medical teams. On our website, we have a place that you can send us questions or share what you're experiencing. Visit [ARKMED.org/covid19](https://ARKMED.org/covid19) and click on the Got Questions box. We will respond to your question as soon as possible. Thank you for your hard work and together we will make it through this crisis.

Arkansas Medical Society  
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