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Glendive Medical Center Addresses Patient Concerns for Healthcare: Dawson County Health Department Offers New Actions for High-Risk Individuals

Glendive, Montana, April 16, 2020 – As COVID-19 cases continue in Montana, hospitals state-wide have prepared internally to separate patients with respiratory illnesses from patients seeking other healthcare services. Glendive Medical Center (GMC) and Gabert Clinic have worked diligently with the Dawson County Health Department (DCHD) to provide a safe environment for patients to continue to receive care for all illnesses and injuries.

“We have been getting feedback from patients asking if they can still see their provider for regular checkups, health concerns, and other non-respiratory related illnesses,” stated Parker Powell, Chief Executive Officer, “We understand there is a lot of information out there about hospitals being overrun by COVID-19. Our clinic and hospital are open with services still available. Patients are welcome to make appointments and as always, they are seen in a safe manner and in compliance with guidelines. We are triaging respiratory symptom patients to completely separate areas of both the clinic and hospital as well as cleaning surfaces frequently and thoroughly.”

Gabert Clinic offers choices on whether patients would like to see their provider in-person or via telehealth services. Both require patients to call ahead first to the main clinic phone number, 406-345-8901. If a patient chooses an in-person appointment, they can enter through the Gabert Clinic entrance. Patients are given a mask and seated six feet apart per social distancing regulations. Telehealth regulations have been waved nationwide during the COVID-19 outbreak and provide a convenient option for patients who would rather stay home. Patients are encouraged to contact their insurance provider prior to scheduling an appointment to ensure the visit will be covered. Patients will need audio and video capabilities on an electronic device such as a smartphone, tablet, or computer to conduct the visit. Once an appointment date is established, the nurse will email a link to log in to the appointment. Not all visits will qualify for telehealth and may require an in-person appointment.

DCHD has been working closely with GMC to ensure these measures are approved per regulations. “COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe illness,” stated Timber Dempewolf, Dawson County Health Department Director, “Safety is our number one priority and we know that quarantining possible positive COVID-19 cases from healthy individuals is proving effective”. Based on current

information from the CDC, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk. Extended Care, The Heritage Assisted Living, and Eastern Montana Veteran's Home have had a no visitor policy for several weeks. The quarantining measures throughout all facilities are to keep all patients and staff safe.

Per the CDC regulations, if a person falls into the higher risk categories, there are other actions they can take to reduce their risk of getting sick:

- Stay home and away from people as much as possible.
- Continue your medications and do not change your treatment plan without talking to your doctor.
- Have at least a 2-week supply of prescription and non-prescription medications.
- Talk to your healthcare provider, insurer, and pharmacist about getting an extra supply (i.e., more than two weeks) of prescription medications, if possible, to reduce trips to the pharmacy.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether your vaccinations are up-to-date. People older than 65 years, and those with many underlying conditions, such as those who are immunocompromised or with significant liver disease, are recommended to receive vaccinations against influenza and pneumococcal disease.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your underlying medical conditions. If you need emergency help, call 911.
- Emergency departments have contingency infection prevention plans to protect you from getting COVID-19 if you need care for your underlying condition. Do not delay getting emergency care for your underlying condition because of COVID-19.
- If you get sick and think that you may have COVID-19, call the Healthcare Hotline at 345-8811 between 7am-9pm, 7 days a week and let them know about your symptoms. Tell them that you have an underlying medical condition and that you may have COVID-19.
- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and are not sick enough to be hospitalized, you can recover at home.
- As COVID-19 spreads in our communities, it is natural for some people to feel concerned or stressed. Having an underlying condition that increases your risk of severe illness may increase these feelings. Gabert Clinic Behavioral Health Specialists are available for patients who feel they may need to talk to someone about their mental health. If a person is feeling suicidal, they are urged to come to the Emergency Room which is open 24/7.

For relevant information from DPHHS, visit: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>.
For up-to-date information about patient and visitor guidelines at GMC, please visit www.gmc.org/COVID-19

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