



Desert Valley Hospital Desert Valley Medical Group

Patient Information Sheet Care During a Public Health Emergency

Dear Patient and Family:

We thank you for trusting Desert Valley Hospital with your medical care. Our doctors, nurses and staff members care deeply about your health and are committed to keeping you updated about the medical care that is available to patients at this time.

Limited Resources During a Public Health Emergency

San Bernardino County has been facing a public health emergency since early 2020 that has reduced the amount of medical resources available to hospitals and patients. As we hit record COVID-19 infections in the midst of these shortages, we need to be very careful with our resources to ensure we have enough to serve our entire community, including those who have illnesses unrelated to this virus. These resources include life support machines (like a ventilator or breathing machine), Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and healthy medical staff (like doctors and nurses) to care for patients.

If we reach a point where our hospital faces a shortage that will affect our ability to care for all patients, a team including doctors, a community member a bioethics designee (who has expertise in the ethics surrounding health care) will review the cases of all patients who are critically ill. Desert Valley Hospital Triage Allocation Team will make necessary decisions about allocating limited medical resources based on the best medical information possible and will use the same decision criteria that is being used nationally and throughout California on all patient cases. This team will be given no information about patient race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, religion, citizenship, insurance or any other information unrelated to the patient's health.

Importantly, the status of all critically ill patients will be re-evaluated daily by our triage allocation team in order to ensure the best possible use of limited resources. In other words, if an ICU bed or ventilator is not available at first, such resources could become available to the patient at a later date.

What This Means for Patients and Their Family or Representative

1. Patients* may not be able to make medical care choices during a public health emergency if medical resources become limited. Even so, it is important for patients to talk to their family members or representative and hospital staff if they:

- a. Have any current medical conditions;
- b. Have an advance healthcare directive or would like to complete one;
- c. Have a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (DNAR) order;
- d. Do not want blood products or important life-saving treatments, such as mechanical ventilation, dialysis or surgeries to prolong their life;
- e. Identify one representative for the patient should the patient be unable to communicate.

2. If a patient becomes ill and the doctor believes the patient needs extra care in an ICU or needs mechanical ventilation (breathing machine), their case will be reviewed, along with other patient cases, to determine how these resources should be shared throughout the hospital.
3. If a patient becomes extremely sick and very unlikely to survive his/her illness (even with life-saving treatment) – limited medical resources may go to treat other patients who are more likely to survive.
 - a. If a ventilator or ICU care is not offered or is stopped, the patient has the right to ask their doctor for further details concerning this decision and will receive everything they need to ensure they are comfortable and free of pain or discomfort.

This is an extremely hard time for our entire community. We are all working together to provide the best care possible. Please feel free to ask your medical team any questions you might have.

** "Patient" refers to the patient or their designated representative if the patient is unable to communicate.*

If you have questions or concerns, please call (760) 241-8000 ext. 8603.