

COVID-19 Update

Statement: The physicians and staff of *Retina Specialists* are working diligently to balance the needs of our patients with our social responsibility to try to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, during this time of crisis. Many of our patients are at risk of losing vision if treatment is prevented or delayed for their acute or chronic retinal conditions. We therefore will continue to care for patients at our three offices however great care will be given to adhere to American Academy of Ophthalmology recommendations and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for Interim Infection Prevention.

Practice Procedures: New practice procedures will include:

- Pre-visit Screening: Physicians and staff will review the appropriateness for timely appointments for examination and treatment. Patient's previous appointment intervals may be extended if deemed acceptable. For example if the patient has been stable and is preparing to return for a 6 or 12 month visit, the appointment may be deferred 1 to 2 months.
- Phone Triage: Established or new patients to the practice with new symptoms may undergo additional phone triage to assess the urgency of an appointment. **If you have been previously told to call urgently for assessment because of new symptoms, please do so and indicate this to the receptionist. Also please notify the receptionist if you are experiencing fever or respiratory symptoms (or exposed to a family member with symptoms) in addition to your visual symptoms. We may ask you to come when there are no other patients in the office if you have an emergent retinal problem and symptoms that could represent coronavirus.**
- Exam / Treatment Modifications: Some exams or treatments may be modified to expedite the patient-physician encounter.

- Social Distancing: Physicians and staff will endeavor to reduce waiting room “crowding” and wait times. Most patients visiting the retinal specialist will need to have their vision checked and their pupils dilated (20 minutes) and require ancillary testing (20 minutes) prior to examination. Per GBMC policy one family member or companion can accompany the patient to the office.
- Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations (CDC): We will encourage patients with fever or respiratory symptoms to reschedule their office appointments if the severity of their retinal condition allows. Patients with symptoms will be required to wear face masks. Health care personnel may wear personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves, eye shields) as necessary. Hard surfaces throughout the offices will be sanitized frequently. Exam rooms and specialized exam equipment coming in contact with patients will be sanitized before/after each patient. Health care personnel will handwash and sanitize per recommendations.

We understand that most of our patients are coming to us because they are at risk of vision loss. Furthermore, we also understand that many of our patients are at risk for the most severe complications of COVID-19. We want to assure you that we will work diligently to provide you, our patients, with the best vitreo-retinal care possible while trying to protect you from exposure to this epidemic of the novel coronavirus.