



February 2021

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February is American Heart Month: How Does COVID-19 Affect the Heart?

The effects of COVID-19 on the lungs are well-known. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, more information is becoming available about the role the virus, called SARS-CoV-2, has on the heart. "Individuals with known cardiovascular disease are at an increased risk of more severe complications from respiratory viral illnesses, including the flu and COVID-19," says Dr. Leslie Cooper, chair of the Department of Cardiology at Mayo Clinic.

Two Main Cardiac Issues

According to Dr. Cooper, there are two dominant cardiac issues related to COVID-19: heart failure, when the heart muscle doesn't pump blood as well as it should, and arrhythmias, or abnormal heart rhythms, that can be related to the infection or to the effect of medications used to treat the virus.

Heart failure can develop due to a systemic inflammatory response to the infection, high lung pressures from lung damage, or occur from heart inflammation known as myocarditis.

"For many people who present with heart failure in the context of COVID-19 infection, we don't know if the heart failure is related to myocarditis or to a response to systemic inflammation from COVID-19," says Dr. Cooper.

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For older patients, with existing coronary artery disease or hypertension, it is likely heart failure resulting from the increased demand placed on the heart and the body's already decreased cardiac reserve capacity, he says. In younger patients, it's likely primary myocarditis caused by the virus.

Long-Term Heart Issues

Since COVID-19 is new, there is little data available regarding long-term cardiovascular issues as a result of the virus. Research has already begun at Mayo Clinic, says Dr. Cooper.

"We need to determine the long-term effects of COVID-19 at both a population health level and individual level," says Dr. Cooper, adding funding from the American Heart Association and National Institutes of Health is spearheading research related to COVID-19's cardiovascular impact.

Staying Heart-Healthy

"We know this is a stressful time for everyone because of the economic and social impact of this disease, even if you don't have it yourself," says Dr. Cooper. "And that can put people at heightened risk for all sorts of stress-related illnesses."

For those with known heart issues – whether high blood pressure or other disease – stay focused on good heart health practices. "Taking care of yourself, being vigilant with hand hygiene, trying to maintain an exercise regimen if you had been before, eating well, are key to maintaining health," he says.

Be Mindful of Emergencies

"Shortness of breath is very common, and only a minority of people today will actually have COVID-19 infection who develop shortness of breath," says Dr. Cooper. "Now, as before, if people develop chest pain or shortness of breath, they should seek medical attention by calling their health care provider or, if it's severe, 911 for assistance."

According to Arkansas Heart Hospital's Dr. Bruce Murphy, Around the world, there is a significant decline (as high as 80%) in patients presenting with heart attack symptoms. The reason? Patients are so concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 in emergency departments, many are choosing to stay home and try to manage mild to moderate symptoms on their own.

For more information on COVID-19 and heart health, [watch here](#). To see how Arkansas Heart Hospital is responding, [see their COVID-19 precautions](#)

Excerpt: <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/how-does-covid-19-affect-the-heart/>; <https://www.arheart.com/from-the-heart/covid-19-and-heart-health/>





Care Coordinators Assisting Empower Members with COVID-19 Vaccines

- Care Coordinators provide education to members on the Department of Health's vaccine plan
- Care Coordinators discuss when the member can get on the waiting list at their local pharmacy
- Care Coordinators have a list of the participating pharmacies in the state.

Should any of your Empower member's need assistance with COVID-19 vaccines you can reach out to our Care Coordination Department at CareCoordination@empowerhcs.com

Arkansas Department of Health COVID—19 Vaccination Plan

The Arkansas Department of Health has published up to date information on their website; <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus> regarding COVID-19 disease and vaccines in Arkansas.

Providers can see a map of pharmacies that offer the Covid-19 Vaccine to assist our members when it is available to them here [Map of Community Pharmacies that Offer Covid-19 Vaccine](#).

To protect yourself and others, the ADH recommends that you get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you. [Click here for more information about vaccination](#).

Though the development of a COVID-19 vaccine has followed an accelerated timeline, **safety has been the top priority**.

Vaccinations began in Arkansas shortly after authorization was granted for the initial vaccine. The initial recipients in Arkansas are health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities.

There won't be enough vaccine initially for all adults who want to receive it. Supply will increase into 2021, and additional vaccines may also be authorized.

Who's getting the vaccine now?

Phase 1-B has started, which means vaccinations are happening now for Arkansans who are 70 or older as well as those who work in education including K-12, child care and higher education.

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Vaccinations can also continue for groups in Phase 1-A, including health care workers, residents and staff at long-term care facilities and these high priority groups: EMS, fire and law enforcement who serve as first responders, primary care, urgent care, college/university student health center, K-12 health clinics and school nurses, dental clinics, pharmacies, home health, private care/personal care, hospice care, dialysis centers, correctional staff involved in patient care and transfer, morticians/funeral home staff involved in direct contact or conducting transports and blood donation centers.

Who's getting the vaccine next?

According to the ADH as supply increases in the coming weeks, the groups eligible to receive vaccine under Phase 1-B will expand. Later, (estimated to begin in April) they will move into Phase 1-C. This will include people 65+ years old, people 16-64 years old with high-risk medical conditions and workers in transportation and logistics, water and wastewater, food service, shelter and housing, finance, IT and communications, energy, media, public safety and public health workers.

COVID-19 GUIDANCE ABOUT MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES:

In November, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an Emergency Use Authorization to allow the use of monoclonal antibodies for the treatment of mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients.

What are monoclonal antibodies?

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic your immune system's ability to fight off harmful viruses. Bamlanivimab and casirivimab + imdevimab are monoclonal antibodies that are specifically designed to protect against the spike protein of COVID-19. These proteins are designed to stop the virus from entering the human cells.

Who can get this treatment?

Non-hospitalized patients with mild to moderate symptoms with less than 10 days since symptom onset & high-risk factors including:

- Age >65 years, or >55 years and 12-17 years with:
 - ◊ Obesity with BMI >35 (adults)
 - ◊ High risk conditions including diabetes, chronic kidney disease, coronary artery disease, hypertension and others

These medications are NOT approved for use in patients who are hospitalized due to COVID-19 or require oxygen therapy. Benefits of treatment have not been observed in patients hospitalized due to COVID-19.





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Monoclonal antibodies may be associated with worse clinical outcomes when given to patients with COVID-19 requiring oxygen ventilation. Individual administration sites may have additional criteria for use of these monoclonal antibody therapies in patients.

These medications will be available at no cost to patients, although health care facilities may charge for administering the medicine.

Excerpt: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirushttps://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/covid-19-guidance-about-monoclonal-antibodies>

Provider Payment and Rate Increases

Empower is committed to following Arkansas Medicaid rates and fee schedules.

How Should Providers Bill a Rate Increase?

- DHS notifies provider of rate change and effective date
- Providers submit claims to Empower with the new rate with dates of service on or after the effective date
- No other action needed from the provider

***Note: If providers submit claims to Empower with the old rate after the effective date, providers will need to submit corrected claims to receive the updated rate.**

The Process for Paying Claims When There is an Approved Rate Increase is as Follows:

- Empower is notified of an Arkansas Medicaid rate change by DHS
- Programming of the new rate in the Empower claims system is started
- Empower pays providers at the old rate until programming is completed
- Once programming is complete a recalculation project will begin and providers will be retroactively paid the difference between old rate and new rate

Provider Alerts

Coverage of COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibodies—January 20, 2021

Empower will be following the DMS Coverage of COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibodies consistent with CMS's coverage and payment for COVID-19 testing and treatment.

The following codes and rates will be available for monoclonal antibodies.

Code	Short Description	Fee	Effective Date
Q0239	BAMLANIVIMAB-XXXX	\$.01	11/9/20
M0239	BAMLANIVIMAB-XXXX INFUSION	\$309.60	11/9/20
Q0243	CASIRIVIMAB AND IMDEVIMAB	\$.01	11/21/20
M0243	CASIRI AND IMDEVI INFUSION	\$309.60	11/21/20

To see the DMS Memorandum regarding Coverage of COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibodies: https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/1a_Memorandum_DMS-48_monoclonals.pdf

21st Century Cures Act Mandate Effective 1/1/21— January 14, 2021

In compliance with the 21st Century Cures Act Mandate, effective 1/1/21, Personal Care visits must be electronically verified for:

- Type of service
- Date of service
- Location of service
- Individual receiving the service
- Caregiver or aid performing the service
- Time service begins and ends
- Claim submission for personal care services

Empower partnered with HHAeXchange (HHAX) to facilitate all Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) for our Personal Care Providers.

You currently have active members and authorizations waiting for you in your HHAX portal from Empower. Please log in to your HHAX portal to begin scheduling and confirming visits on your members' calendars.

It is critical that configuration with HHAX is complete on or before 1/31/2021 as Empower will be required by the State of Arkansas to deny unverified visits for Personal Care claims as of 2/1/2021.

If you are using your own third party EVV system, please reach out to edisupport@hhaexchange.com as soon as possible to complete your integration.





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Details about file specifications and integration steps are at <https://link.zixcentral.com/u/1b498d6a/woKYvNk-6xGbalsHYVsSiw?u=https%3A%2F%2Fhhaexchange.com%2Far%2F> on the “EDI Process” tab.

The Quick Visit Entry function is to enter visits into HHAX for generating claims and to comply with the mandate. Please refer to the [Quick Visit Entry Process Guide](#) for more details.

Coronavirus Provider Alerts

Empower is taking steps to prepare for the unique challenges related to the developing COVID-19 outbreak and resulting declared state of emergency in Arkansas. The uncertainty posed by a public health emergency can cause stress and anxiety among many individuals. Therefore, core to our plan is ensuring that members have access to routine and emergency services.

The following is a list of alerts related to COVID-19:

- ◆ [Coronavirus - Updated Laboratory Diagnostic Testing for COVID-19 8.12.20](#)
- ◆ [Coronavirus Use of Telemedicine Services for Substance Abuse Assessment 7.7.20](#)
- ◆ [Use of T2020 UA Supplemental Support Services 6.12.20](#)
- ◆ [Use of Well Checks for EIDT and ADDT providers during COVID-19 Outbreak 6.1.20](#)
- ◆ [Coronavirus - Telemedicine Services to be Provided by FQHC and RHC 5.8.20](#)
- ◆ [Coronavirus - Provider Alert Summary 4.27.20](#)
- ◆ [Coronavirus - Additional Services Ready to Bill 4.23.20](#)
- ◆ [Coronavirus-FQHC & RHC Flexibilities in Service Provision 4.21.20](#)

For earlier released Coronavirus Provider Alerts see Empower's website at the following link. <https://www.getempowerhealth.com/coronavirus/>

As we execute our plan, we will keep you updated via alerts, our [website](#), and our [Facebook](#) page. Please click [here](#) for the most up to date information regarding COVID-19.

For Up to Date and Additional Key Information regarding COVID-19:

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>

Arkansas Department of Health

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/>

Medical Record Documentation Audits—Moved to February 2021

Empower Healthcare Solutions has begun the process of launching its first Provider Medical Record Documentation Audits. These Medical Record Documentation (MRD) Audits are being conducted with Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) and Behavioral Health Physicians in the Empower network.

In accordance with the approximate timelines for this process, letters to the 10 Primary Care Physicians and the 10 Behavioral Health Physicians were mailed in December, followed by contacts with the providers by the Quality Department staff. Letters requesting members' medical records for the audits are being sent to those identified providers in February with the expectation that records will be submitted to Empower within 14 calendar days of receipt of the request for records. The aggregated data reflecting the results of the audits will be shared this spring.

We are appreciative of the providers and their staff who are participating in and have responded in a timely manner to the requests made by the Quality Department in order to conduct these Medical Record Documentation Audits.

The audits are an integral part of Empower's Quality Improvement process, which seeks to improve member care and treatment outcomes. The audits are conducted with the intent of improving the quality of providers' medical recordkeeping and assuring that providers comply with state and federal regulations and other established standards, such as the Empower Provider Manual.

Resources:

Stay in the know with these useful links!

Empower Resource Links:

[EUV](#)

[Provider Alerts](#)

[Provider Billing FAQ](#)

[Quick Reference Guide](#)

[Clinical Practice Guidelines](#)

[Provider FAQ](#)

[Empower Ethix360](#)

[Provider Handbook](#)

[Provider Quality Improvement Activities](#)

Arkansas DHS Resource Links:

[DMS: PASSE](#)

[Office of PASSE Ombudsman](#)

[PASSE Information for Providers](#)

[Provider Enrollment](#)



Upcoming Webinars

Provider Orientation—This webinar will cover Empower related information including provider responsibilities, provider resources, member rights and responsibilities, eligibility, covered services, utilization management, care coordination, claims submission, quality improvement, the Empower portal, and more.

Provider Orientation		
Tuesday, February 16, 2021	10:00 am—11:30 am	Register Here!
Tuesday, March 16, 2021	10:00 am—11:30 am	Register Here!
Tuesday, April 20, 2021	10:00 am—11:30 am	Register Here!
Tuesday, May 18, 2021	10:00 am—11:30 am	Register Here!
Tuesday, June 15, 2021	10:00 am—11:30 am	Register Here!

Educational Opportunities

The following is a list of available trainings offered by Empower Healthcare Solutions:

- Community and Employment Supports (CES) Waiver: The PCSP, Justification for Services, and Things to Know when Submitting for Authorization
- Acute and Psychiatric Residential Treatment
- Community and Employment Supports (CES) Waiver: An expansive overview of services, descriptions, and codes
- Assisting Providers with Independent Assessments at Empower
- Care Coordination Overview
- Person Centered Service Plan
- Incident Reporting for Empower Providers
- Empower Provider Orientation
- InterQual and Medical Necessity Evaluations
- Arkansas InterQual Inpatient Provider Training
- Provider Portal: Prior Authorization and Claims
- Psychiatric Residential Treatment and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF)
- Inpatient Authorizations: Navigating Identifi and Medical Necessity
- Outpatient Services and Home and Community Based Services
- Personal Care Services
- Overview of Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Day Treatment Services
- Developmental Disabilities Services

To access a training slide deck click [here](#) and go to Educational Opportunities.

For more information or to schedule a training for your organization, please contact empowerhealthcaresolutionsPR@empowerhcs.com

Important Contact Information

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Appeals

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Improvement Program for PCP's

EmpowerPIP@Empowerhcs.com

Quality Incentive Program for Medical/Surgical Hospitals

EmpowerQIP@Empowerhcs.com



To visit our website please go to:

www.getempowerhealth.com

On our website you will find:

- Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Contracting with Empower
- Cultural Competency Plan
- EVV
- Forms and Resources
- Incident Reporting
- Provider Alerts
- Provider FAQ
- Provider Billing FAQ
- Provider Handbook
- Provider Portal
- Pharmacy Provider Guideline
- Provider Quality Improvement Activities

Please feel free to share this newsletter.

If you would like to receive the newsletter, provider alerts, or training information please register for the provider distribution list at the following link.

[Provider Signup](#)

Division of Medical Services (DMS)

toll-free numbers:

Beneficiary Eligibility
800-482-8988

Beneficiary Coverage
800-482-5431

Office of PASSE Ombudsman
844-843-7351