

be well

A DIGNITY HEALTH PUBLICATION | SPRING 2021

Feeling Well?
Catch Up With Your
Checkups

Primary Care vs. Urgent
Care vs. ER:
Know Where to Go

A Continuum of

Expert Cancer Care



Dignity Health[®]

Mercy Medical Center
Redding

Leadership Letter

HELPING YOU

BE WELL



What a difference a year makes. Phase 1 of the vaccination rollout in California is well underway, and a return to a new normal that seemed unreachable a few months ago is on the horizon.

For over a year, the health care heroes across Dignity Health have persevered and excelled at delivering the highest quality care through these uncertain times. Behind the personal protective equipment and COVID-19 protocols are people in your community who are committed to doing their utmost to support your health goals and provide quality care when you are sick.

Make your long-term physical and mental health a priority, and access care with confidence. Now is the time to catch up on missed screenings or speak with your provider at your annual visit. Call 911 in an emergency, and keep your provider in the loop if you experience concerning symptoms.

We will continue to provide the best health care safely. Rely on the providers of Dignity Health North State as we work to see it through together.

Todd Strumwasser, MD
President
Northern California Division,
Dignity Health

At Dignity Health, we believe the two pillars of humanity and kindness are the yin and yang of healing: powerful alone, but **better together**.

North State News

Mercy Medical Center Redding



Awarded the highest level of accreditation for the last 30 years, our Mercy Redding Cancer Centers are an amazing resource for all patients in our region as we provide quality comprehensive cancer care. In addition to the wide range of leading-edge treatments we offer, our care teams of oncologists and other specialists take the time to meet together and carefully customize each patient's plans based on their individual needs. Through this collaboration, our experts at Mercy Medical Center Redding are able to help their patients navigate the entire process with education and support.

—G. Todd Smith, President, Mercy Medical Center Redding

St. Elizabeth Community Hospital



When it comes to chemotherapy and immunotherapy infusion treatments, we know our cancer patients value receiving exceptional care close to home. At the Oncology and Infusion Center in Red Bluff, our comprehensive cancer care team includes medical oncology and infusion services, collaborating with radiation oncology services both locally and within our North State network. We are proud to offer access to this high level of expertise, in a safe and relaxing healing environment for patients of all ages in our community.

Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta

To offer a full range of rehabilitation services for all ages right here in our community is in line with our mission—to improve the health of the people we serve. At Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta, our passion is to meet our patients' needs with personalized plans to help restore, improve and maintain function. Our physical, occupational and speech therapy programs connect inpatients and outpatients alike with personalized plans to help them live their best life.

—Rodger Page, President, St. Elizabeth Community Hospital and Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta

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Prioritize Your Health

KEEPING TABS ON CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SEEING YOUR PROVIDER ABOUT NEW CONCERNS ARE IMPORTANT, EVEN IN A PANDEMIC.

In February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released an alarming new statistic—life expectancy in the United States had dropped by an entire year in the first half of 2020. But the massive losses from the COVID-19 pandemic weren't the only reason for the fall.

The CDC estimates hundreds of thousands of excess deaths since the pandemic started. While some are likely undiagnosed COVID-19 deaths, many others account for people putting off annual screenings for diseases like cancer or heart disease, and those who are not getting the regular care they need for diabetes or kidney disease until it's too late.

Don't Delay Care

If you haven't seen a doctor since 2019 or early 2020, now is the time to catch up on all your postponed care. Dignity Health North State can help get your health back on track with needed screenings, vaccines and well-person visits.

The health care you need will vary by your age, sex and any other health conditions you have. But in general, you need regular screenings for your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol. Women also need regular cervical cancer screenings and, once they are older than 40, mammograms to screen for breast cancer. Men 55 and over need prostate cancer screening.

Both sexes should have screenings for colon cancer starting at age 45 and osteoporosis at age 50. If you are at high risk for lung cancer, you should begin screening at age 55.

Several of these tests can be performed during a regular physical exam by a primary care provider (PCP). Your PCP can also check for moles that could be a sign of skin cancer and ensure you are up to date on your needed vaccines. And if you have insurance, they are required to offer you an annual well-person visit at no cost, whether or not you have met your deductible. Lung cancer screenings, mammograms, colonoscopies and Pap tests are also included.

If you have existing health conditions like diabetes or heart disease, it's even more important to keep up with your primary care. And for minor concerns, Dignity Health also now offers virtual visits, making it easy to receive medical care without leaving home.

PROVIDERS ARE HERE WHEN YOU ARE READY. VISIT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG](https://dignityhealth.org) AND WATCH THE VIDEO TO LEARN THE MANY WAYS TO SAFELY ACCESS CARE.



Outstanding Oncology

MERCY MEDICAL
CENTER REDDING
COMBINES LEADING-
EDGE CANCER
TREATMENT WITH
COMPASSIONATE
CARE AND SUPPORT.

When you or someone you love is coping with a cancer diagnosis, finding personalized, comprehensive care is paramount. The oncology team at Mercy Medical Center Redding strives to give patients the security and comfort of expert cancer treatment, provided by a skilled staff and customized for each patient's highest quality of care.

"We recognize that the needs of an individual diagnosed with cancer are unique, and we are committed to meeting those needs as we treat them," said Sierra Seidel, RN, BSN, OCN Oncology Clinical Nurse Liaison at Mercy Medical Center Redding. "Our providers meet weekly to develop individualized treatment plans, and the oncology team follows up with patients and families to offer education and support."

These weekly meetings, called tumor boards, occur every Tuesday, and a multidisciplinary team of providers discuss patient cases to help create personalized treatment plans. The team includes medical oncologists, pathologists, surgeons, radiologists and radiation oncologists. Oncology and palliative nurses join as well, and all physicians and staff are welcome to attend, whether in-person or remotely. By including several types of oncology providers, each patient case benefits from a multitude of perspectives and a comprehensive approach to cancer care.

"These boards are a great forum for physicians to bring a unique or difficult case to the group for treatment evaluation," said Kim Rice, MHA, Clinic Operations Manager at Mercy Medical Center Redding. "The presenting physician then has the opportunity to go back to the patient and share the board's recommendations, helping the patient and provider make a decision that best suits the patient's needs."

Precisely Done

Another way we tailor cancer treatments to our patients' needs is through the leading-edge practice of precision oncology. Prior to precision oncology, oncologists could observe patients responding differently to the same treatment methods; only recently have researchers begun to understand why.

"Precision oncology is essentially personalized medicine," said Lesley Camire, Service Area Oncology Director at Mercy Medical Center Redding. "It uses the genomic information of an individual, taking into account clinical and environmental factors, to assess their risk and tailor therapeutic strategies. It's a method that helps us improve medical decision-making and with delivering appropriate therapies, tailored to a patient's sequence variants or genotype rather than the general population."

"Precision oncology looks at where cancer cells divide, finding the trigger points that cause the division at the DNA level," said Dyanesh Bapu Ravindran, MD, FACP, Medical Director of Outpatient Clinics at Mercy Medical Center Redding. "We send specimens to companies that do molecular testing and use that information to identify the mutations. Once we've identified the mutations, we have treatment that targets the mutation."

In comparison to treatments such as chemotherapy, which can damage healthy tissues as well as cancer cells, precision oncology only targets cancer cells that happen to carry mutation.

"It's an excellent way to help slow cancer growth and extend the patient's survival and quality of life," Dr. Ravindran said. "Some targeted therapies can work for several months, even years."

Mercy Medical Center Redding also partners with GenesisCare, recognized as a national leader in radiation cancer treatments. This partnership gives our patients access to advanced treatment technologies, operated by specially trained physicians, physicists and therapists.

Here to Help

Cancer care requires more than just advanced technologies and treatment methods. We understand that a cancer diagnosis for you or someone you love is an overwhelming experience. Each of our providers works closely with patients and families throughout the testing, diagnostic and therapeutic processes to ensure a high-quality continuum of care.

Our team is focused, first and foremost, on you and those you love. We make ourselves available whenever possible to address any concerns or questions you may have. This includes providing community resources, education and emotional support, ranging from support groups to financial assistance to transportation.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic, our providers have also implemented telehealth appointments for continued treatment," Rice said. "This technology allows patients to keep oncology appointments while staying safe and comfortable in their own homes, and some patients use telehealth to include out-of-town family members in their decision-making process."

"We're committed to providing quality, patient-centered care," Camire said. "Comprehensive oncology can be delivered close to home and tailored to meet each individual's needs."

TO FIND A MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST AT A MERCY MEDICAL CENTER REDDING LOCATION NEAR YOU, VISIT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG](https://dignityhealth.org) OR CALL 877.690.5568.

30 Years of Standard-Setting

For the past three decades, the American College of Surgeons has awarded Mercy Redding Cancer Centers their highest level of accreditation as comprehensive cancer programs. This honor demonstrates the dedication of our providers and staff, setting an example throughout the North State of how to offer leading-edge, multidisciplinary cancer care.

But what does this accreditation mean for our patients?

- + We make our patients the center of our care, using a multidisciplinary team to address their concerns.
- + We monitor our patients' care from beginning to end, offering guidance every step of the way.
- + We offer our patients information about new treatment options and developing clinical research.
- + We provide medical and emotional support to our cancer survivors, offering lifelong follow-up.
- + We strive to keep improving our quality of care, and we've proven that we continue to offer excellent oncology care to our community.



Emergency Care in the Midst of a Pandemic

SEEKING TIMELY MEDICAL CARE FOR EMERGENCIES IS STILL CRITICAL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

→ Stroke and the Importance of Acting FAST

As one of the most time-sensitive health care emergencies, stroke must be treated as quickly as possible. The longer you wait to treat a stroke, the more likely it is that you or a loved one will sustain irreversible brain damage. If you notice:

- + **f**ace drooping
- + **a**rm weakness
- + **s**lurred speech
- + **t**ime is of the essence, and you need to call 911 immediately.

Health events do not always happen during business hours, and waiting until Monday morning for medical care may not always be safe. While the COVID-19 pandemic may be causing you to second-guess a trip to see a health care provider, you should not hesitate to seek out medical attention for an emergency because you are afraid of the virus. As other medical institutions have done across the United States, Dignity Health North State has taken rigorous steps to ensure our facilities are as safe and as clean as possible.

Is It an Emergency?

If you suspect you or a loved one is experiencing a critical situation, such as a heart attack or stroke, calling 911 for immediate medical attention is absolutely essential. If care is not administered quickly enough, the consequences could cause loss of function, or worse, loss of life. But those are not the only two situations that require emergency care. Multiple conditions may need emergency attention, while others may be more conveniently addressed at an urgent care center.

At an urgent care center, a medical professional, such as a nurse practitioner or a primary care provider (PCP), can provide treatment for acute or chronic illnesses and injuries on an outpatient basis. The urgent care provider can also refer you to specialists when needed. Urgent care is a good option in the evening or on the weekends or holidays, when most doctors' offices are closed.



Where to Go When

Whenever a medical event occurs, calling your PCP is a good first step to take. Together, you can quickly review symptoms and determine where to go for the most effective and efficient treatment. In certain instances, your PCP may determine that your condition is not emergent and you can wait until his or her office is open to schedule an appointment. However, if your condition needs to be addressed more quickly in the emergency room or at an urgent care center, the following chart can help you determine where you need to go.

Urgent Care

- + allergic reactions that are minor
- + back pain that is mild
- + bronchitis
- + burns that are minor
- + cold, cough, fever or flu
- + ear pain or sinus pain
- + eye irritation, redness or swelling
- + headache
- + infections of the skin
- + mild asthma
- + minor injuries, such as bumps, cuts and scrapes
- + nausea
- + rash
- + sore throat
- + sprains, strains and minor fractures

Emergency Room

- + chest pain
- + heart attack
- + major fractures where the bone is visible
- + major head injuries
- + poisoning
- + seizures
- + severe burns
- + difficulty breathing
- + uncontrollable breathing



Could the Condition Be COVID-19?

If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of a mild to moderate case of COVID-19, your PCP may recommend a virtual visit. This option allows you to connect with a health care provider from the comfort of your home. These consultations can happen over the phone or through video chat. To request a video chat, you can use the Dignity Health mobile app or by visiting dignityhealth.org/videovisitresources. Once your request is received, a virtual health provider from our team will meet with you in the virtual exam room to review your symptoms and discuss a care plan.

Virtual visits are available to anybody who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, such as cough, low-grade fever and shortness of breath. Many insurers offer coverage for virtual visits that may also be categorized as a qualified medical expense that you can pay for with your FSA or HSA account.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW DIGNITY HEALTH IS ADDRESSING WELLNESS DURING COVID-19, VISIT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG/CORONAVIRUS-DISEASE-2019](https://dignityhealth.org/coronavirus-disease-2019).

Prioritizing Wellness

Many people often shy away from the doctor's office when they feel fine, but seeing your health care provider for routine medical visits—even when you don't feel sick—is an important step to staying well in the future.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, health care facilities across the country suspended nonemergent medical services in an effort to free up resources for individuals experiencing the virus. As a result, many individuals were forced to cancel routine wellness visits that included critical screenings to detect conditions such as cancer and heart disease.

Now that hospitals and doctors' offices have put safety protocols in place to shield patients from COVID-19, make an effort to reschedule any wellness exams or other routine appointments that you may have missed during the past year.

During routine visits with your health care provider, you can also discuss when the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to you if you have not had it yet.

To find a primary care provider at Dignity Health, visit dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors.





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You've got a lot of life to live. Beyond cancer.

You are more than your diagnosis. At Dignity Health – Mercy Medical Center Redding, our nationally recognized cancer program features a comprehensive range of services—from treatment through supportive care and recovery—so you get the plan that best fits your needs. And guiding you every step of the way is our team of experienced, certified specialists, who are here to coach you throughout your cancer journey. Because when advanced, personalized and safe care is close by, you can focus on healing. And living. Don't delay the important care you need. Learn more and find a cancer care specialist at DignityHealth.org/MercyReddingCancerCare.

Hello humankindness®

