

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

Cancer Therapy — Making Comfort a Top Priority



Dignity Health®

St. Elizabeth Community Hospital

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.



CANCER CARE

AROUND THE CORNER

IF YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU EVERY STEP OF THE JOURNEY.



Cancer isn't easy to handle. Thankfully, you don't have to navigate a diagnosis alone. Alongside your family and friends, the staff at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital Oncology and Infusion Center ensures you have everything needed for treatment, healing and survivorship. Conveniently located in Red Bluff, patients have access to oncology care nearby.

"Patients no longer have to travel far for high-quality cancer services," said Romi Uribe, RN, BSN, Manager of Clinic Operations. "They now can get all the same treatments that would be provided at a larger hospital right here in their own community."

What We Offer

The Oncology and Infusion Center provides infusion services for patients with breast, colon, lung and prostate cancer. The oncology team administers chemotherapy and immunotherapy injection or infusion treatments in a warm, caring atmosphere. Our center isn't limited to only oncology services; team members are also trained in assisting with blood and platelet transfusions, hydration, IV antibiotics, and port flushes. Our providers see both pediatric and adult patients.

The center also utilizes precision oncology to tailor treatment to each individual. Precision medicine allows a physician to choose a treatment based on the unique genetic makeup of a person's tumor. A provider will use molecular profiling to understand more about the tumor and then apply the specialized treatment that will be most effective.

While treatment is the heart of what we do, the center also focuses on prevention and education to help people recognize their cancer risk. We offer routine screenings in the community for breast, lung and prostate cancer, and coordinate colonoscopies with other providers to screen for colon cancer.

Haven for Healing

The Oncology and Infusion Center is a comforting environment that promotes healing while helping patients pass the time. Our nurses make the process smooth and as painless as possible so patients can relax during therapy. Patients enjoy our many amenities free of charge, including:

- coordination of transportation within 30 miles of the facility
- heated massage chairs to sit in during the infusion
- kindness kits for new patients that include crossword puzzle books, lip balm and other items
- lap blankets donated by the community
- medical interpretation, if necessary
- plenty of snacks and drinks

“When you walk through our doors, we treat you as one of our own friends or family members,” Uribe said. “We understand and can empathize that the treatment process isn’t easy. Yet, we do everything we can to make you feel at ease.”

Uribe explains the value of having an infusion center nearby for patients going through cancer treatment. Treatment often causes unpleasant side effects, such as nausea, vomiting or fatigue. Infusions also take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. Patients who previously received infusion treatments outside of Red Bluff often had to drive over an hour each way. With the opening of the infusion center, they no longer have to.

“We don’t want patients driving back and forth from their appointments when they aren’t feeling well,” Uribe said. “We collaborate with Mercy Medical Center Redding, UC Davis Medical Center and oncology centers on treatment. You can keep your established oncology doctor for regular appointments but get infusions here with us.”

Care Focused on You

Patients may be apprehensive about infusion appointments, especially if it’s their first time. Each patient is assigned to a nurse navigator who works as an advocate and walks each patient through the treatment process.

“Treatments are serious, but our nurses make sure everyone is engaged and treated with kindness,” Uribe said. “They work hard to establish those connections, build relationships and know each person on a personal level.”

Jed Freeman, MD, Hematology and Oncology Specialist at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital, applies his 30 years of experience to help patients achieve the most successful outcomes with treatment. From guiding work-ups for other providers to simply offering a listening ear, patients can trust he has their best interests in mind.

“Dr. Freeman isn’t afraid to take a longer appointment or share his personal phone number with patients,” Uribe said. “Patients know they have his full attention. He deeply cares about each person and wants to make sure they are heard.”

CALL US AT **530.529.6010** TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CANCER RESOURCES AT ST. ELIZABETH COMMUNITY HOSPITAL.



Taking a Holistic Approach

Do herbal remedies, yoga or massage fit into your cancer treatment plan? Jed Freeman, MD, Hematology and Oncology Specialist at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital, works with patients to find out. The St. Elizabeth Community Hospital Oncology and Infusion Center uses proven conventional medicine for treating cancer; however, Dr. Freeman also recognizes the value in applying holistic approaches to care. This blended treatment concept is unique and not offered by many cancer programs.

Before your next appointment, list any questions you have about integrating complementary methods into treatment. Dr. Freeman will discuss whether or not it supports your healing process and will also coordinate with other providers to educate them on how it fits into treatment.

Here are examples of holistic methods we help coordinate:

- + diet and fitness (direct referrals provided to a dietitian)
- + herbal medicine
- + massage therapy
- + private Pilates and yoga classes
- + relaxation methods
- + self-care practices
- + senior nutrition
- + stress reduction



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.

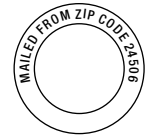
During routine visits with your health care provider, you can also discuss when the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to you if you have not had it yet.

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 – St. Elizabeth Community Hospital, 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/StElizabethCancerCare.

Hello humankindness®

 **Dignity Health.**
St. Elizabeth Community Hospital

