



23 March 2020

To our valued patients,

At this time of great uncertainty, we hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and well.

At Southwest Eyecare, we support our Nation's and Governor's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, but want to assure you that our doors are open for all patients with sight-threatening eye problems!

We continue to care for all established patients in the midst of treatment for urgent or sight threatening eye problems, see consults as indicated by referring physicians and are available to any recent post-operative patients. Also, any patient who reports new or concerning symptoms is encouraged to contact our office to determine if a visit to the office is needed.

It's difficult to assess which patient problem or situation should be deemed absolutely necessary. But with the COVID-19 death rate disproportionately affecting those greater than 60 years of age, and those individuals with multiple medical problems, we have enacted these policies to help stop the spread of COVID-19. But more importantly, to protect you, our patients, from this unseen enemy.

The health and welfare of our staff is equally important, and we would like to point out that our staff are handling themselves in a particularly noble and selfless manner. At this most difficult time they continue to have your best interest at heart. We're extremely proud of their commitment to SWEC and to you, as we all persevere through this crisis.

**Summary of what to expect going forward until this situation is resolved:**

1. **Please seek care at your local hospital IF you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, have been exposure to someone that is COVID-19 positive, have traveled recently to one of the high risk areas or have any of the following symptoms**
  - **Fever**
  - **Coughing**
  - **Shortness of Breath**
  
2. **URGENT CARE at Southwest Eyecare**

Our primary concern is to keep you and your loved ones healthy and safe. To this end we are limiting in-clinic patient visits to emergency or vision threatening conditions only. Should you require care on-site our staff and physicians are taking extra protective precautions:

  - Expect verbal COVID-19 related screening questions upon arrival
  - Patients may be asked to wear a mask and/or gloves
  - Additional cleaning and disinfecting is taking place throughout the clinic and in between all patient encounters over and above the CDC and WHO requirements.
  - Unless needed for mobility or communication, all family members will be asked to wait in their vehicles
  - Patients, staff and physicians are asked to minimize unnecessary conversation during all exams, in particular during the slit lamp exam when close proximity is unavoidable.

3. **ONGOING CARE at Southwest Eyecare**

If you are a patient that requires regular monitoring of your condition (glaucoma, macular degeneration, post op care, dry eye, etc.) and have a scheduled appointment in the next few months, you may be contacted to reschedule if it is believed that your visit can be safely postponed. However, if you disagree or have changes in your condition, we will of course have a doctor available for your exam in the clinic.

4. **Electronic Visits at Southwest Eyecare**

While all aspects of eye care are not available through Telemedicine, the challenges being presented by COVID-19 are opening up options that allow established patients to communicate remotely with their doctor by telephone or through our patient portal. It may allow the doctor to “see you” from your home depending on the concern. This service is billable through your insurance and may be an option for you to get care and decrease your risk of becoming ill from COVID-19. You can initiate this request for care by calling our office to schedule an appropriate remote consultation with a physician over the phone, video chat OR through the communication tool of our patient portal (see instructions below).

As always, if you need us, we are available and here to help you and your family. **Call (505) 346-0500**

Sincerely,

John Teahan, MD  
Paul Sanchez, MD  
Kenneth Downes, MD  
Jesse Swift, MD

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING SWEC PATIENT PORTAL.

1. [www.southwesteyecare.com](http://www.southwesteyecare.com)
2. Upper left corner of the site, click on where it says **Patient Portal**
3. Then click on the center of the page that opens and says **Continue to Patient Portal**
4. **You will need your user name and password.**
  - a. **IF you do not have that information click on Need help with your login**
  - b. **IF you have not ever set it up, you will Create an account (on the right)**
  - c. **IF you need additional assistance, please email [swec@southwesteyecare.com](mailto:swec@southwesteyecare.com)**
    - i. **Emails will be returned twice daily - each morning and again in the evening.**
    - ii. **This process should NOT BE USED if you require urgent attention!**