

- CDC published a study looking at how our handwashing practices have changed since COVID – things are better, but young guys 18-24 years-old were “less likely to remember to wash hands in multiple situations.” Go figure.
- Providers get a one year reprieve on paying back the advance payments from CMS.
- After sinking during the early part of the year, it is encouraging to note that Medicare FFS payments had “nearly returned to 2019 levels” by the week ending July 1. On the prevention side, mammography returned to pre-Covid levels and colonoscopies were at 85% of pre-Covid levels. (More under “Research”)

CMS Announces New Repayment Terms for Medicare Loans made to Providers during COVID-19: CMS announced a one year grace period for repayment of loans/advance payments received by providers. Now, payments are to begin one year from the issuance date of each provider or supplier’s accelerated or advance payment. The [amended terms for payments issued under the Accelerated and Advance Payment \(AAP\) Program](#) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump. The Medicare loan program had allowed CMS to make advance payments to providers and is typically used in emergency situations. Under the *Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act* repayment will now begin one year from the issuance date of each provider or supplier’s accelerated or advance payment. CMS issued \$106 billion in payments to providers and suppliers in order to alleviate the financial burden healthcare providers faced while experiencing cash flow issues in the early stages of combating the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). For more information, CMS has released a [Fact Sheet](#) and [FAQs](#) related to the Accelerated and Advance Payment Repayment and Recovery terms.

Testing and Treatment

NIH Clinical Trial Testing Whether Remdesivir Mixed with Concentrated Antibodies Will Enhance Recovery: A clinical trial to [test the safety, tolerability and efficacy of a combination treatment regimen for COVID-19](#) consisting of the antiviral remdesivir plus a highly concentrated solution of antibodies that neutralize SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has begun. The study is taking place in hospitalized adults with COVID-19 in the United States, Mexico and 16 other countries on five continents. The NIAID, part of the NIH, is sponsoring and funding the Phase 3 trial, called Inpatient Treatment with Anti-Coronavirus Immunoglobulin, or ITAC.

“Sensing” When COVID Patients Are In Need of Greater Medical Interventions Through a Remote Monitoring Device - BARDA is [collaborating with Current Health to support healthcare providers in monitoring COVID-19 patients](#), detecting deterioration in their health and predicting disease severity. This partnership will leverage Current Health’s FDA-cleared wearable vital-sign monitor and Mayo Clinic’s advancements in the management and treatment of COVID-19 positive patients to develop a digital biomarker-based algorithm that can predict the need for hospitalization and ICU level care. Current Health's patient monitoring platform combines vital-sign sensors, connectivity to other devices and telemedicine capability that could allow COVID-19 patients to be monitored nonstop by their healthcare providers for risk of patient deterioration. The wearable sensor continuously collects respiratory rate, oxygen saturation, mobility, pulse rate and body temperature data and is able to collect novel COVID-19 biomarker information.

Information on Self-Collecting Anterior Nasal Samples for Health Care Providers: The FDA issued a letter to [health care providers](#) recommending that health care providers give clear, step-by-step instructions to patients who, in a health care setting, are self-collecting anterior nasal samples for SARS-

CoV-2 testing. Without proper instructions, patients may not collect an adequate sample for testing, which may decrease the sensitivity of the test.

Testing Updates: 273 tests are authorized by FDA under EUAs; these include 215 molecular tests, 53 antibody tests, and 5 antigen tests.

Information for Specific Populations

CDC's Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic: This [interim guidance](#) is based on current information about the transmission and severity of COVID-19. Please check the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) periodically for updated guidance. Because conditions vary from community to community, disaster shelter managers should look to their state and local health officials for information specific to their location.

FDA Reaffirms Commitment to Safety, Security of its Public Health Laboratories: FDA's to protect and promote public health by ensuring the safety of the nation's food supply, as well as the safety and efficacy of medical products, has always relied on a rigorous analysis of the scientific data available and a strong commitment to safety. We are dedicated to helping ensure the safety of the American public through our work and the safety of all of our staff by continuing to support and strengthen a culture that [prioritizes workplace safety](#).

Tips to Address Increased Alcohol and Substance Use: Increased stress can lead to [increases in alcohol and substance use](#). If you or someone you care about is starting to use alcohol or other substances, or is increasing their use during the COVID-19 pandemic, here are a few suggestions that may help: contact your healthcare provider; locate virtual treatment and recovery programs icon; medication-assisted treatment for alcohol or opioid use disorders may be an option, take medicine as prescribed and continue your therapy, treatment, or support appointments (in person or through telehealth services) when possible; and call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service (1-800-662-HELP) to speak with someone about an alcohol or substance use problem.

Toolkit on State Actions to Mitigate COVID-19 Prevalence in Nursing Homes: CMS updated the [toolkit on state actions to mitigate COVID-19 prevalence in nursing homes](#), including recent information and guidance on vaccinations to prevent infection with influenza virus, pneumococcus, and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

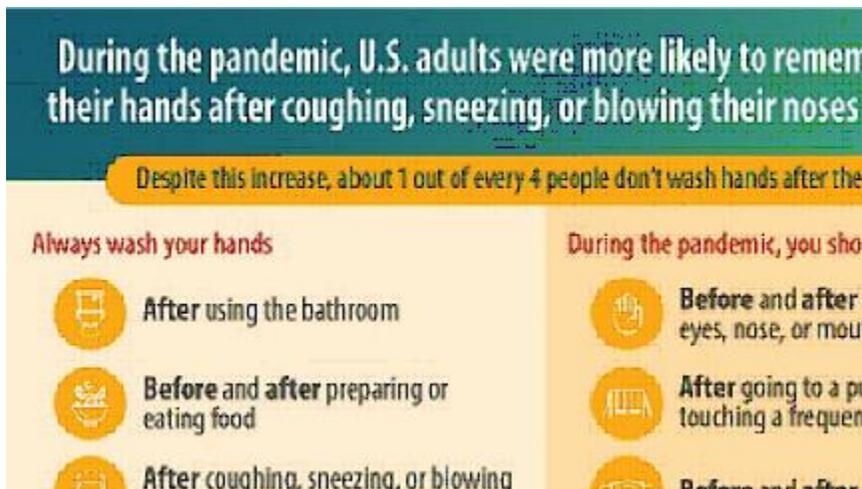
Research Updates

NIH to Launch the Serological Sciences Network for COVID-19, Announce Grant And Contract Awardees: [NCI has launched](#) the [Serological Sciences Network for COVID-19 \(SeroNet\)](#), an initiative aimed at quickly increasing the nation's antibody testing capacity and engaging the U.S. research community to understand the immune response to COVID-19. NCI is part of the NIH. SeroNet will engage more than 25 of the nation's top academic, government and private sector biomedical research institutions to study the immune response to COVID-19 to speed delivery of testing, treatments and vaccine development for combat the pandemic.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Medicare Beneficiary Use Of Health Care Services and Payments to Providers: ASPE recently released an [Issue Brief summarizing the impact of the COVID pandemic on utilization and spending in Medicare FFS](#) thru the first half of 2020. Medicare beneficiary

service utilization and associated Medicare payments to providers dropped substantially from mid-March through mid-April and have been returning towards 2019 levels since that time.

Characteristics Associated with Adults Remembering to Wash Hands in Multiple Situations Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic: CDC released an MMWR on [Characteristics Associated with Adults Remembering to Wash Hands in Multiple Situations Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) in the U.S. between October 2019 and June 2020. U.S. adult Internet survey respondents in June 2020 were more likely to remember to wash their hands after experiencing respiratory symptoms, before eating in a restaurant, and before eating at home than were October 2019 survey respondents. Despite improvements, <75% of survey respondents reported remembering to wash their hands in these situations in 2020. Public health efforts should promote frequent handwashing for all, with attention to tailoring messaging to men, young adults, and non-Hispanic White adults. Particular focus should be placed on encouraging handwashing at important times such as before eating and after experiencing respiratory symptoms.



Fight the Flu Vaccine Campaign Kickoff: Spread the word – Getting an annual flu vaccine is more important than ever this fall. #FightFlu by getting vaccinated today. Say #BooToTheFlu: During the month of October, use #BooToTheFlu to encourage others to get their flu vaccine by Halloween. More Info: ["Boo To The Flu" Toolkit](#)

Don't Forget to Get Your Flu Shot! Surgeon General Jerome Adams was kind enough to give me my flu shot this year -- surely a shot from the S.G. will be doubly effective! Other Senior HHS Officials have gotten their flu shots too.



I was very brave!

Secretary Alex Azar Retweeted



HHS.gov @HHSGov · Oct 7

Getting a [#FluVaccine](#) is more important than ever. That's why from across HHS are getting their [#flu](#) vaccines and are encouraging Americans to do the same. Do your part to protect yourself and your community – [#SleeveUp](#) and [#FightFlu!](#)





#DYK it takes 2 weeks after you get a #flu shot immunity? BARDA Acting Director Dr. Gary Di... his #SleeveUp to #FightFlu! Will you join Gary your flu shot by Halloween? Find a place to get vaccinated and say #BooToTheFlu: bit.ly/36b7...



Dr. Robert Kadlec
@DrKadlec_ASPR

I received my #flushot & am urging all Americans to do the same. It's flu season & an annual flu vaccine is important this year as #COVID19 continues to burden our communities. Don't overburden hospitals by getting yourself to a twindemic. #FightFlu by getting vaccinated today.

