

Coronavirus Update



How the American Heart Association is making an impact during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Updated March 26, 2020

The American Heart Association is working with researchers, medical experts, community leaders, businesses, families and more to reduce the impact of the coronavirus. The following are some ways we're dedicating our resources to make a difference. For updated information on the coronavirus and what heart disease and stroke patients should do to protect themselves, [click here](#).

We're investing a minimum of \$2.5 million in cardiovascular research to help coronavirus patients.

The Association has [established](#) a \$2.5 million rapid research fund to fast-track scientific research to better understand COVID-19 and its interaction with cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases.

COVID-19, like most in the coronavirus family, is mostly a disease of the respiratory system. But reports are showing that people with high blood pressure or who have heart disease or survived a stroke may be more vulnerable to its effects, with mortality rates two to three times higher than in the general population. Additionally, there are reports of infected people without underlying complications who are developing deadly arrhythmias from infection and inflammation that damage heart muscle and this may further illustrate a critical relationship between COVID-19 and the cardiovascular system. We anticipate funding a national coordinating center and at least 10 COVID-19 and its Cardiovascular Impact Rapid Response Grants of \$100,000 each.

Additional supplemental funding grants are also being offered to the Association's new Health Technologies & Innovation Strategically Focused Research Network centers to create new technology-based solutions for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are helping to accelerate antiviral drugs to combat COVID-19.

Today, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory is using the technologies created by the AHA Center for Accelerated Drug Discovery – specifically, a drug discovery pipeline, scalable virtual screening, machine learning algorithms and a draft database – and applying those technologies to a COVID-19 response. We have an immediate opportunity to leverage these learnings and propel new discoveries to better diagnose and, ultimately, treat COVID-19.

We are leveraging our science and relationships to help lead the conversation about the coronavirus and how it affects at-risk patients.

The American Heart Association will be monitoring and convening experts as needed to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of the latest evidence regarding care for people who contract COVID-19 – for the public, patients, caregivers and health care professionals.

We will continue to collaborate with national and global health colleagues to address clinical care issues as they arise for people with cardiovascular disease, e.g. [joint statement issued on March 19](#). In addition, the Association's family of 12 scientific journals is publishing the latest research related to COVID-19 and cardiovascular disease to help scientists and clinicians from around the world.

Our science volunteers are producing statements that provide direction and support to health care providers and researchers as they seek to prevent the virus and care for patients, while working to find cures.

We are meeting the needs of health care workers dealing with the coronavirus pandemic.

Our health care workers are on the front lines of this pandemic, and we are working with them to ensure they have the training and resources they need. In response to the shortage of trained ICU personnel for using ventilators, we are rapidly launching a new course for Oxygenation & Ventilation of the COVID-19 patient, which will be available worldwide by March 31. We are also working to add COVID-19 tracking and appropriate measures to our [Get With The Guidelines®](#) modules to better manage current patients while preparing for research studies to improve health in the future.

On the health technology side, we are working alongside a group of innovating companies that are focusing on remote-patient monitoring, as well as developing solutions to manage a hospital's patient load. Since those with cardiovascular disease are among those most affected by COVID-19, we are developing a new clinical/industry advisory group to better support these individuals who become infected.

We are teaching hospitals and communities how to safely and effectively administer CPR during the coronavirus pandemic.

While the world's attention is on the COVID-19 pandemic, the fact remains that more than 366,000 people in the United States will suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest this year. To support our nearly 400,000 CPR Training Network instructors, we have established interim guidance, resources for any continued in-person training given social distancing, and we are recommending 60-day extensions on provider and instructor cards. These actions provide our Training Network with the flexibility and support during times when health care professionals may be unable to conduct training, not only due

to risk of the coronavirus, but also because they are being called away from training to work the front lines to save lives.

For individuals and health care providers, we have established [this website](#) with CPR training-related resources and information (videos and additional resources are coming soon). We will also be using social media campaigns to encourage individuals to use the Hands-Only CPR approach if they encounter a victim of cardiac arrest.

We are working with federal and state governments to ensure families have access to care.

The American Heart Association supports several provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law on March 19. The bill addresses several of our advocacy priorities by:

- Guaranteeing free coronavirus testing.
- Increasing the manufacture of personal protective equipment for front-line health care workers.
- Enhancing unemployment insurance in response to anticipated job losses from the coronavirus pandemic.
- Expanding federal child nutrition programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Increasing federal Medicaid funding to ease the financial strain on state budgets during the pandemic.

In addition, we are urging governors and state legislatures nationwide to take immediate steps including:

- Removing barriers to COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- Promoting continuity of care for Americans with serious health conditions.
- Waiving rules that require in-person interactions that inadvertently promote community spread of COVID-19.

With these goals in mind, we are asking states to increase funding for Medicaid and public health services to immediately respond to the coronavirus crisis and protect people with pre-existing conditions during the pandemic.

We are working in communities across the country to ensure people in greatest need have access to care, financial support and other resources.

The health and economic crisis is taking a toll on many families, especially those with limited resources. Through our Social Impact Fund Investees, we are filling in the cracks not covered by government services while providing life-sustaining support for under-resourced communities. Some examples include [increasing support](#) for families living in public housing that are struggling to pay rent

due to missed paychecks or layoffs, [providing daycare and mental health services](#) for struggling parents, and [delivering healthy foods](#) to the elderly and disadvantaged who cannot travel outside.

Through the [EmPOWERED and Well Online Church Challenge](#), we are offering innovative health solutions to faith communities who either may not be able to meet or are observing social distancing.

Our local teams are working with partners to ensure they continue to [nourish families](#), support [physical activity](#) and [reduce the burden of chronic disease](#) during these difficult times. As schools across the country close, we are striving to support the countless school districts and other providers working to ensure that the 30 million children who depend on school meals continue to have access to those meals. We are also supporting early care and education providers in continuing to provide [high quality care](#) while connecting them with [resources](#) to address limitations and changing enrollment.

We are working with parents and teachers to keep kids healthy and active while away from school.

As more schools are cancelling class for extended periods, the American Heart Association is quickly responding with resources for parents and teachers to keep children active and engaged in healthy behaviors. Through the [Kids Heart Challenge](#), we have developed the *Kick Cabin Fever to the Curb 10-day Challenge* that's designed to get kids up and moving while home. This campaign uses virtual rallies, social media and more to keep kids interested, -- and helping parents and teachers.

We are providing businesses with essential resources to help their employees stay healthy and active.

As more businesses institute work-from-home strategies, the American Heart Association is quickly adapting its resources to meet the ever-changing needs of the workforce. These resources include a library of materials that encourage physical activity while working from home, stress management and healthy cooking recipes with shelf-stable foods. For companies participating in our Workplace Health program, My Life Check home test kits are available for employees to participate in health screenings, and employees can continue to participate in their digital coaching program.

We are meeting people where they are by providing the resources they need.

As people adapt to new ways of living, the American Heart Association stands ready to create and curate engaging content for individuals to be more aware and share. We will continue to deliver quick, simple and actionable ideas that increase a person's overall health and well-being. These tools are centered to serve three primary groups: people who are not quarantined and cannot stay at home because they have an essential job or role, those who are adopting to a new way of life at home but are not sick, and those who have been diagnosed with the coronavirus and have cardiovascular disease.

We're committed to supporting our heart and stroke patients, and their caregivers, by providing a network of resources and emotional support. Through our online empowerment tools, patients can

continue to [monitor their blood pressure](#) and other health metrics in the comfort of their own home. Our website (heart.org) is full of information for patients and individuals around the connection between COVID-19 and cardiovascular disease, and we will continue to update this information with specific information for various heart conditions. In addition, the [Support Network](#) provides an opportunity for patients and their caregivers to engage online with others and find emotional support in a time of social isolation. For those not online, our staff is available to answer questions using our toll-free number (1-800-242-8721).