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Contact: Barbara Laughon, NIH Strategic Communications

(760) 873-5811 ext. 3415 **|** [Barbara.Laughon@NIH.org](mailto:Barbara.Laughon@NIH.org)

**As lab patients return to NIHD, appointments strongly suggested**

As the nation opens back up for business, so is the Northern Inyo Healthcare District. The District remains operational with a few limitations. The District asks those returning to its laboratory for blood work to help the District keep all returning patients safe by remembering to schedule their lab appointments.

Two options are available for lab draws at this time. Patients may request an in-house lab draw. This means they would enter the hospital lobby, check-in with admissions, answer COVID-19 screening questions, and then be escorted to the lab room for their draw. Hours for in-house draws are 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7:30 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

Alternatively, if the test allows and time permits, patients may request a drive-up car appointment. This allows patients to stay in their vehicles as masked and gloved NIHD phlebotomists come to them in the hospital parking lot.

Car appointments are limited to morning hours, Monday through Friday, 6 -11 a.m., due to the increasingly warm weather. No car appointments are available on Saturdays due to staffing.

NIHD requires patients and their staff to wear masks at all times while on the NIHD campus. Those needing a mask will be given a Project Cover-Up fabric mask for their visit at check-in.

According to Diagnostic Services Director Larry Weber, the District is experiencing heavy walk-in visits for blood draws. While staff welcomes the return to the hospital for such services, it is also filling up the waiting room areas. “We’ve taken steps to promote physical distancing in all our wait rooms,” Weber explained. “We’ve essentially eliminated about half of our normal seating, so when we experience a large number of walk-ins, we struggle to meet those physical distancing requirements.”

Weber strongly suggests patients make a lab appointment when given draw orders by their primary care providers. “This is a system we went to more than a year ago, and it has worked out very well, resulting in minimal delays for patients,” Weber said. “It also helps us better plan for the arrival, screening, and safe care of the patients.”

To make a lab appointment, call (760) 873-2155. Should you have additional questions about available services at NIHD, please call (760) 873-5811 for assistance.

***About Northern Inyo Healthcare District:*** *Founded in 1946, Northern Inyo Healthcare District features a 25-bed critical access hospital, a 24-hour emergency department, a primary care rural health clinic, a diagnostic imaging center, and clinics specializing in women’s health, orthopedics, internal medicine, pediatrics and allergies, general surgery, colorectal surgery, breast cancer surgery and urology. Continually striving to improve the health outcomes of those who rely on its services, Northern Inyo Healthcare District aims to improve our communities one life at a time. One team, one goal, your health.*