Dear [Patient Name],

I am writing today because your health and well-being are very important to me. As you know, over the past month many people have become ill with COVID-19, the illness caused by the newly discovered coronavirus. Many people who become ill with COVID-19 experience cold and flu symptoms and recover fully on their own. However, some become seriously ill and some have died. The most effective way to stay well is to stay home and to keep a safe distance from other people when you do grocery shopping or pick up medicines.

Unlike conditions like heart disease and cancer that may take years to reach a serious stage, COVID-19 sickness can occur unexpectedly and worsen rapidly. That’s why I am encouraging you today to consider your wishes for medical care if, despite all best efforts, you do become ill.

I would like to help you think about what medical care you would want if you become seriously ill from coronavirus. These are hard questions to answer. And yet, it is very important for me and for your loved ones to know how you feel and to make sure you receive the care that is right for you. Please take a moment to make an appointment to speak with me by phone or by telehealth to share your thoughts with me.

**Please know that I am prepared to support your decisions. Whatever you decide, I will ensure to the best of my ability that you receive the best care possible.**

Some questions to consider until we speak together are below.

* **Who would you trust to make your medical decisions if you were unable to speak for yourself? This person is called a health care proxy and health care providers should know how to reach that person, if necessary.**
* **If you have already named someone as a health care proxy, have you talked with them about your wishes?**
* **If you become ill with COVID-19, do you want to be admitted to the hospital for medical treatments or would you prefer to receive medical care at home? Care at home might be more comfortable for you but you could not receive intensive care treatments.**
* **If you are hospitalized for COVID-19 treatment, do you want to undergo intensive care and ventilator support (breathing machines)? If so, is there any situation where you would not want to be kept alive on a breathing machine?**

Thank you for taking time to read this letter and please do not hesitate to *[send me your questions or contact my office so we can schedule a phone call or telehealth visit to talk further]*. In the meantime, please stay well and be safe.

Sincerely,

## [Clinician Name]

**CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION**

**COVID-19 Letter to Patients**

**What?** The purpose of this outreach letter is to encourage patients in the community to think about how they would want to be cared for if they became seriously ill with COVID-19. The letter provides information about COVID-19 and advance care planning questions. It also invites patients to schedule a follow up visit to talk about these important issues with their health professionals.

**Why?** In the midst of this pandemic, patients and families have questions, thoughts, and concerns about what COVID-19 means for their health and care. With public attention on the potential seriousness of the infection- including the need for ventilators and intensive care- some patients have begun to have conversations about their wishes with their support networks. In this moment, clinicians have a critical role in ensuring that patients’ priorities remain at the forefront of their care, but time constraints limit the capacity to reach out to all patients in a short timeframe.

**Who?** This letter can be sent by clinicians to patients in the community who have underlying health conditions and are at increased risk of critical illness or death from COVID-19 infection, should they contract it. While there is still a lot to learn about this infection, the highest risk patients may include **older adults**, those who are **immunocompromised**, and/or **patients with one or more** of the following underlying conditions:

* Cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease
* Pulmonary disease
* Advanced cancer
* Chronic renal disease
* Diabetes and hypertension
* Frailty

**Where?** Sending the letter to patients can occur by email, via a patient portal in the electronic medical record, by mail, or other means depending on your clinic’s practice. A follow-up visit, if scheduled, will likely occur via telehealth.

**When?** Early! Ideally at a time when the patient is feeling well.

**Tips for successful use:**

1. Consider sending the letter in advance of an already scheduled visit to minimize receiving a large number of requests for telehealth visits at once.
2. Be ready to discuss [protective measures](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) to prevent infection.
3. Adapt the letter to include any personalized changes.
4. Access our [COVID-19 Conversation Guide for Outpatient Care](https://covid19.ariadnelabs.org/2020/04/15/serious-illness-care-program-covid-19-response-toolkit/#outpatient-resources) to guide a follow-up telehealth visit.
5. Access a 2-page [patient and family Advance Care Planning Guide](https://theconversationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/tcpcovid19guide.pdf), which you can send with the letter.