

St. Luke's Treats 1,000th COVID Patient with Monoclonal Antibody Therapy



Dr. Peter Ender speaking at the news conference.

St. Luke's, which is participating in research on the effectiveness of monoclonal antibodies, has found the therapy reduces hospitalization by 50% and emergency room visits by 40%, resulting in a significant reduction in the burden, including the financial burden, that COVID-19 places on the health care system. St. Luke's is submitting the results of its study for consideration by peer-reviewed academic journals.



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By Sam Kennedy

BETHLEHEM - Today St. Luke's University Health Network treated its 1,000th COVID patient with life-saving monoclonal antibody (MAB) therapy.

"With the collaborative efforts of many smart and motivated people, this monoclonal infusion program has become incredibly successful in the outpatient care of patients with COVID-19," said infectious disease specialist Peter Ender, MD, at a news conference at St. Luke's Easton Campus on Wednesday. Ender oversees St. Luke's COVID-19 treatment programs. "The logistics were not always easy, but this group has found a way to get it done."

Monoclonal antibody therapy at St. Luke's has helped hospitals in the greater Lehigh Valley region avoid being overwhelmed during the current surge, allowing certain high-risk patients to recover quickly in the comfort of their own homes.

Granted emergency authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, monoclonal antibodies block the virus' attachment and entry into human cells. Infusion has been found to be particularly effective in preventing the need for hospitalization in select, higher-risk patients including those who are 65 years of age or older and whose infection, identified early, does not yet require supplemental oxygen.

In November, St. Luke's became the first health care provider in Pennsylvania to offer MAB therapy in an outpatient setting. The first clinic opened at St. Luke's Easton Campus, followed shortly thereafter by a second clinic at St. Luke's Warren Campus in Phillipsburg, N.J.

Earlier this month, St. Luke's Miners Campus opened St. Luke's third MAB clinic – the only facility in rural Schuylkill County offering this important therapy.

St. Luke's is the leader in monoclonal antibody treatment in eastern Pennsylvania. Unlike St. Luke's, most hospitals in Pennsylvania and across the country have not taken full advantage of their allocations of monoclonal antibodies. St. Luke's is proud to have made this important weapon in the fight against COVID-19 accessible to the communities we serve.



Hike Healthy: Avoiding COVID-19 infection on the Appalachian Trail



COVID-19 (commonly referred to as "Coronavirus") is a highly contagious respiratory virus that has been diagnosed in the majority of the states along the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). Initial symptoms of COVID-19 appear between 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. However, some may experience more severe symptoms, including difficulty breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion or inability to arouse, and bluish lips or face. Those who experience any of these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

In order to minimize your risks of contracting COVID-19, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy recommends that all hikers follow the guidelines below, which are based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization.

- Wash your hands frequently with biodegradable soap at least 200 feet from water sources. When soap is not available, use hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing food. Do not eat out of the same food bag, share utensils or drink from other hikers' water bottles.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Use a tissue and dispose of it using Leave No Trace Principles
- Keep some distance between you and other hikers whenever possible, especially if anyone shows signs of being sick. Avoid shaking hands or other close contact — instead, elbow bumps or waving are safer ways to greet others.
- Avoid congregating in groups along the Trail.
- If you are an older adult or have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, you are at a higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19 disease. Hike and camp away from others to minimize the likelihood of infection.
- If you begin feeling sick, stay away from others and get off the Trail until examined and cleared for return to the Trail by a medical professional.
- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 while on the A.T., please submit a report to the ATC with as much detail as possible using the form at <https://appalachiantrail.org/report-covid-19>.

For more information about COVID-19 and prevention tips, please visit cdc.gov/covid19.

For additional information on how the COVID-19 outbreak is affecting Appalachian Trail facilities and ATC visitor centers, please visit appalachiantrail.org/updates.

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