

COVID-19 Testing Information for Healthcare Providers

(3/15/20)

There are currently no restrictions on who can be tested for COVID-19 and commercial testing is becoming more available. Healthcare providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) but until testing supplies and laboratory capacity are widely available, public health is asking providers to follow the below recommendations.

The following patients with COVID-19 symptoms should be tested for COVID-19:

- Patients hospitalized with severe lower respiratory illness
- Healthcare workers
- Patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Patients involved in an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, homeless/shelters, other institution/congregate setting)

The following patients with COVID-19 symptoms should contact their healthcare provider and be tested for COVID-19 if their symptoms worsen or their healthcare provider recommends testing:

- Patients older than 60 years
- Patients with underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant women

Younger, healthy individuals with mild illness do not need to be tested and testing is not recommended in persons who are asymptomatic. A negative test result does not rule out an infection.

If COVID-19 is being considered, whether testing is performed or not, please provide patients with the following guidance documents so that they know how to best prevent the spread of infection to other people, and to minimize phone calls to your office and to public health.

- [Patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#)
- [Patients who were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case](#)
- [Unexposed patients with COVID-19 symptoms](#)

See the DOH website for other resources: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/>

Testing at Commercial Laboratories

In general, healthcare providers should send specimens for COVID-19 testing to commercial laboratories.

Until the University of Washington Virology Lab has more testing capacity readily available, they are prioritizing specimens from hospitalized patients, healthcare workers and first responders.

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Other specimens can be sent to LabCorp, Quest and other commercial laboratories doing testing.

Please see each laboratory's test menu for specimen collection instructions, submission forms, and shipping requirements. Please be sure to include the patient's name, date of birth, address and phone number. The Washington State Insurance Commissioner has ordered all Washington health insurers to waive deductibles and copays for COVID-19 testing.

Testing at the Public Health Laboratories

Specimens from the following patients can be sent to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories:

- Healthcare workers
- Patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Patients involved in an illness cluster in a facility or group (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, business)
- Patients with no health insurance

If seeking testing at the Public Health Laboratories, call your [local health jurisdiction \(LHJ\)](#) with the above information to discuss the case. If possible, please call 8 AM – 4:30 PM. PHL will fax its results to the submitter and LHJ.

For PHL testing, collect specimens and send with the below nCoV form including submitter name, address, phone number, and fax number.

- Collect nasopharyngeal (NP) and oropharyngeal (OP) synthetic swabs and place both swabs together in 2-3 ml viral transport media
- If a lower respiratory tract specimen (sputum, BAL, or tracheal aspirate) is available, collect lower respiratory sample in sterile container and nasopharyngeal (NP) synthetic swab in 2-3 ml viral transport media.
- For all samples, put specimen type and two identifiers (e.g., name, birthdate) on tubes and form, and store at 2-8°C.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>