

# COVID-19 Testing Information for Healthcare Providers

(3/9/20)

**There are currently no restrictions on who can be tested for COVID-19. Commercial testing is becoming widely available. Healthcare providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath).**

Though testing may not change clinical management, knowing patients' COVID-19 status will help public health track COVID-19 and better respond to the outbreak.

The following patients with COVID-19 symptoms are considered at highest priority for testing:

- Healthcare workers
- Employed in public safety occupation (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Part of an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, shelters)
- With severe lower respiratory illness (hospitalized or fatal)
- With worsening symptoms
- Older than 60 years
- With underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant women
- Had contact with a suspect or lab-confirmed COVID-19 patient or had travel from an affected geographic area, within 14 days of their symptom onset

Any other patients can be tested per healthcare provider judgment.

In general, we do not recommend testing asymptomatic persons. However, you can consider testing asymptomatic persons if they have been in close contact with a confirmed case. A negative test result does not rule out an infection.

If COVID-19 is being considered, whether testing 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. 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.

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## Testing at the Public Health Laboratories

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

- Healthcare workers
- Employed in public safety occupation (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Part of an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, shelters)
- Patients with no health insurance
- Specific request by Local Health Officer

**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>