

EPI Update for Friday, March 13, 2020
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

COVID-19 Testing Framework

Healthcare providers can test patients, as they deem appropriate for COVID-19 infection at national reference laboratories. If healthcare providers choose to test a patient through a national reference laboratory, there is no need to call IDPH for approval. The specimens should be sent directly to the reference laboratory in accordance with the laboratory's guidance. Please ensure you are using appropriate infection control guidance when collecting specimens, which includes at a minimum contact and droplet precautions with eye protection. If a patient tests positive for COVID-19 through a national reference laboratory, the ordering healthcare provider must notify IDPH immediately prior to patient notification by calling 800-362-2736. Reference laboratories will charge patients for this testing; public health has no funding to cover the costs of these tests.

The State Hygienic Laboratory will continue to perform COVID-19 testing in accordance with one of the following criteria (these criteria may broaden as the pandemic expands).

- Hospitalized patients with fever and respiratory failure and no alternate diagnosis
- Hospitalized older adults (>60 years of age) with fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, difficulty breathing) and chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, immunosuppressive medications, chronic lung disease, or chronic kidney disease)
- Any persons (including healthcare providers) with household contact with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to becoming ill with fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing)
- Any persons with a history of international travel to a country with a Level 3 CDC travel health warning (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>) or have taken an international cruise in the 14 days prior to becoming ill with fever and respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) and no alternate diagnosis

If patients meet this testing criteria, please submit the specimen to the State Hygienic Laboratory in accordance with the following guidance, <http://shl.uiowa.edu/dcd/covid19.xml>.

There is no longer a requirement to contact IDPH for testing approval prior to submission to the State Hygienic Laboratory. To conserve limited public health resources, please ensure that ONLY specimens from patients meeting the testing criteria above are submitted to the State Hygienic Laboratory. The cost of this testing is assigned to the public health system.

Protocol for Iowa Long Term Care Facilities reporting two or greater residents or staff reporting respiratory illness (with no alternative diagnosis)

- Report illnesses to IDPH at 800-362-2736
- Isolate sick residents and send sick staff home immediately
- Use contact and droplet precautions with eye protection when providing care for sick residents
- Collect 1- nasopharyngeal swab and 1- oropharyngeal swab from each ill resident and staff member
 - Package the 1-nasopharyngeal and 1-oropharyngeal swab into one viral transport tube for COVID-19 and Influenza testing
- Communicate with IDPH to coordinate specimen pickup and transport to the State Hygienic Laboratory
- State Hygienic Laboratory will test for COVID-19 first and if negative will test for influenza
- Close to visitors until illnesses resolve
- Consider canceling group activities until illnesses resolve
- Consider serving meals in room until illnesses resolve

For additional COVID-19 guidance visit: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>

Thank you to our healthcare and public health partners for your continued efforts to respond to COVID-19