

Health Advisory: Updated SARS-CoV-2 Testing

Minnesota Department of Health, Wed Apr 14:00 CDT 2020

Action Steps

Local and tribal health department: Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

Hospitals, clinics and other facilities: Please forward to infection preventionists, infectious disease physicians, emergency department staff, hospitalists, primary care clinicians, and all other health care providers who might see patients with acute respiratory symptoms.

Health care providers:

- Prioritize sending specimens to the commercial laboratories according to the Commercial Laboratory Specimen Testing Priorities below.
- Send specimens to MDH's Public Health Laboratory only if they meet MDH Testing Priorities below.
- Counsel patients who can't be tested to self-quarantine at home, isolated from household contacts. Their household and intimate contacts should limit public activities for 14 days.

Suggested Commercial Laboratory Specimen Testing Priorities

- Ill individuals (residents or staff) in congregate living settings (long term care facilities, prisons/jails, homeless shelters, etc.)
- Ill dialysis patients
- Ill hospitalized patients
- Ill health care workers taking care of immunosuppressed patients
- Ill health care workers and their ill household contacts
- Ill patients 65 years of age and older
- Ill patients with underlying medical conditions
- Ill first responders who provide direct medical assistance
- Ill child care providers

MDH Testing Priorities

Limit sending specimens to MDH to:

- Ill individuals (residents or staff) in congregate living settings (long term care facilities, prisons/jails, homeless shelters, etc.)
- Ill dialysis patients

Patients Who Can't Get Tested

Patients with undiagnosed fever and/or acute respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) who can't test tested should:

- Self-quarantine for 7 days after illness onset and 72 hours after resolution of fever without taking fever-reducing medications, and improvement of respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer.
- Isolate themselves from household and intimate contacts as much as possible.

Household and intimate contacts of these individuals should limit their activities in public for 14 days after incorporating precautions in the home, and monitor for symptoms.

Patient Specimen Collection Guidance/Specimen Type for MDH

- **Only one specimen per patient will be tested.** If more than one sample is received, the most preferable specimen will be tested. All specimens submitted to MDH must come in an approved liquid transport media (criteria below). Dry swabs are not acceptable and will be rejected for testing. Preferred specimen types, IN THIS ORDER:
 1. NP swab.
 2. OP swab.
 3. Nasal swab: Mid-turbinate specimen using a flocked tapered swab, OR Anterior nares using a round foam swab (collected by a healthcare professional or by onsite self-collection).
 4. Nasopharyngeal (NP) **AND** oropharyngeal swab (OP). Put both swabs in the same container.
 5. Sputum for those patients with productive coughs. Do not induce sputum. Sputum should be collected into a dry, sterile container. Do not add viral transport media.
- Approved transport media: Although VTM/UTM is still preferred, additional media types have been deemed acceptable by FDA: 1) Liquid Amies-based transport media is acceptable; 2) Sterile saline is acceptable (use 1.5 mL minimum); 3) Hanks buffer (use 1.5 mL minimum)
- Additional swab types have been deemed acceptable by FDA: 1) E-swab by Copan; 2) Opti-Swab by Puritan; 3) For additional swab types approved by FDA:
<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/faqs-testing-sars-cohttps://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/faqs-testing-sars-cov-2>
- Specimens older than 72 hours will be rejected, unless we receive them frozen.

Check with your commercial lab for their specimen submission requirements.

A [Clinical Testing & Submission Form](#) and a COVID-19 Patient Testing Form (MDH COVID Patient Testing Forms <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/eval.html#forms>) must be completed for each specimen; note COVID-19 testing in comments.

Again, strongly consider using a commercial laboratory instead of MDH.

Positive results from MDH will be communicated immediately to the provider. Negative and positive results will be faxed immediately to the submitting laboratory; please do not call us for

the results. Results may not be available for up to 3 days. Please inform your patient of the result and do not have them call us for results.

For More Information

More information is available at the [CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage](#) or by calling MDH at 651-201-5414.

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network](#)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.