

Health Advisory: Shortage of SARS-CoV-2 Testing

Minnesota Department of Health, Tues Mar 17 13:00 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:

- Assess whether your clinic or system can send specimens to a commercial reference laboratory; determine priorities for testing and assess whether these labs have restrictions (at present we are aware that all four laboratories have also run out of reagents and may not be able to accept specimens).
- Limit sending specimens to the Minnesota Department of Health to those from hospitalized COVID-19 patients. At this time, we can also test ill health care workers and ill persons living in congregate settings.
- Inform all patients who present with undiagnosed fever and/or acute respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), even those not able to be tested, that they should self-quarantine for 7 days after illness onset, or 72 hours after resolution of fever (without taking fever-reducing medications), and improvement of respiratory symptoms. Inform patients to call ahead.
- Patients who are not able to be tested should 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.

There is a national shortage of test reagents and supplies. The Minnesota Department of Health has a very limited supply of testing materials. Four major commercial laboratories offering testing may also be out of reagents.

Patient Specimen Collection Guidance/Specimen Type

Only one specimen per patient will be tested. CDC recommends collecting and testing an upper respiratory nasopharyngeal swab (NP). Collection of oropharyngeal swabs (OP) is a lower priority and if collected should be combined in the same tube as the NP. Collection of sputum should only be done for those patients with productive coughs. Induction of sputum is not recommended.

Instructions for specimen collection and shipping can be found at [CDC Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons Under Investigation \(PUIs\) for Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

A [Clinical Testing & Submission Form](#) and a COVID-19 Patient Testing Form ([MDH COVID Patient Testing Forms](#)) must be completed for each specimen; note COVID-19 testing in comments.

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Positive results 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 7 days.

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.