



Health Alert



City of Chicago
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

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Chicago Department of Public Health
Allison Arwady MD MPH, Commissioner

Recommendations for Health Care Providers to Test All Patients with Acute Respiratory Illness for COVID-19 **April 30, 2020**

Summary and Action Items:

- Health care providers are encouraged to clinically evaluate and obtain COVID-19 molecular testing for all symptomatic patients, even those with mild symptoms.
- Serologic tests should not be used to diagnose acute infection in symptomatic individuals.
- All clinicians and sites conducting COVID-19 testing must play a crucial role in the COVID-19 response by promptly reporting all individuals tested for COVID-19 to Public Health, by one of the mechanisms for timely investigation and isolation of cases.
- When resources necessary for widespread testing are limited, providers should follow [CDC Priorities for Testing Patients with Suspected COVID-19 Infection.](#)

Background: During early phases of the COVID-19 response, with limited laboratory capacity, COVID-19 testing was prioritized to optimize care of hospitalized patients, identify those at highest risk of complications from infection, and detect cases in critical infrastructure workers and first responders. Laboratory capacity to diagnose COVID-19 infections has increased to support testing for many in outpatient settings who have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. Increasing the ability to identify COVID-19 cases and report to public health is fundamental for investigation and isolation of cases to mitigate spread.

- **Providers are encouraged to obtain specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing for all patients seeking care who are symptomatic, even those with mild symptoms.**
 - Providers should leverage existing health systems infrastructure or identify reference laboratories that can perform COVID-19 molecular testing
 - Providers should use a laboratory that can provide a result with a turnaround time of 24 hours or less, and that can electronically report to public health (see below for more guidance)
 - Providers unable to gain access to reference laboratories, may leverage public health resources for testing: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/testing-guidance>
 - The use of standard, contact and droplet precautions with eye protection is appropriate for suspect or confirmed COVID-19 patients. PPE should include gloves, gown, facemask (procedure or surgical mask), and eye protection (face shield or goggles)
 - Providers unable to implement droplet precautions with the above PPE should arrange for transport to a facility that can safely evaluate the patient using their typical referral system.
- **Serologic tests should not be used to diagnose acute SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) infection.** Serologic tests do not have a role in diagnosing acute infection in symptomatic individuals since antibody responses to infection may take days to weeks to be detectable. Negative serology would, therefore, not exclude SARS-CoV-2 infection in a patient with recent exposure to the virus. Cross-reactivity of antibody to other common coronavirus proteins may also occur, so positive serology may either reflect infection with SARS-CoV-2 or past infection with other human coronaviruses. Use of validated serologic tests will be important in detecting infections with few or no symptoms, and during surveillance studies to determine the proportion of the population that has been exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

- **Reporting requirement for laboratories and clinical providers.**

- All providers and testing sites must report to Public Health all individuals tested for COVID-19, in accordance with the Illinois Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690.200(a)(5)), and Chicago Department of Public Health PH 2020-4 (reference below).
- Sites should submit electronically through the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (I-NEDSS) via integrated Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR).
- Clinicians and testing sites unable to submit a case report form through I-NEDSS must identify another mechanism for electronic submission, as identified in CDPH PH order 2020-6 (reference below). This can include a direct Health Level Seven (HL7) electronic data feed, or through a confidential online REDCap submission.
 - For assistance in establishing an HL7 feed, send an email to: CDPHCovidDataHub@rush.edu
 - To submit a case report form through REDCap, please visit the following website: <https://redcap.dph.illinois.gov/surveys/?s=FR7MAJAY84>

When testing resource limitations necessitate prioritization of testing decisions, providers should refer to [CDC PRIORITIES FOR COVID-19 TESTING](#) for molecular testing, which are summarized below. *However, when adequate testing capacity is available, all symptomatic patients should be tested.*

- **High Priority:**

- Hospitalized patients
- Healthcare facility workers, workers in congregate living settings, and first responders **with** symptoms
- Residents in long-term care facilities or other congregate living settings, including prisons and shelters, **with** symptoms
- Persons identified through public health cluster and selected contact investigations

- **Priority:**

- Persons **with** symptoms of potential COVID-19 infection, including: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea and/or sore throat
- Persons **without** symptoms who are prioritized by health departments or clinicians, for any reason, including but not limited to: public health monitoring, sentinel surveillance, or screening of other asymptomatic individuals according to state and local plans.

- **Testing individuals without symptoms is not a priority in routine clinical settings.** Testing of other individuals, including asymptomatic individuals identified in health care settings, congregate living settings, and workplaces may occur in limited settings as part of public health investigations and infection control interventions.

References:

<https://www.chicagohan.org/covid-19>

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/testing-guidance>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/serology-testing.html>

Public Health Orders: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/health-orders.html>