

## Health Advisory: Expanded Testing for SARS-CoV-2

Minnesota Department of Health, Wed, May 20 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:**

- Test more people for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR to take advantage of increased and available laboratory capacity in Minnesota.
- Prioritize testing for people who are (more details below):
  - Symptomatic
  - Asymptomatic in congregate settings
  - Staff working in high risk settings
  - Part of cluster investigations
  - Asymptomatic and requiring medical care
  - Asymptomatic mission-critical public utilities workers
- Report cases of COVID-19 to MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.

### Background

Recent data suggest that a large proportion of infected people can shed virus (based on PCR-positive swab) but may be pre-symptomatic, asymptomatic or have minimal symptoms. In addition, it is becoming evident that multiple reservoirs of infection are involved in ongoing transmission, such as certain work and congregate settings. Congregate living situations, including nursing homes, prisons, hospitals and homeless shelters, may have staff who travel between facilities, the community and home. Also, recent data from local hospitals suggest a high rate of infection in asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic PCR positive people admitted for non-COVID-19 reasons. Identifying pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic infected individuals will improve the ability to identify cases and institute appropriate isolation and quarantine measures. This guidance is intended to assist with prioritization of testing and is not intended to limit testing.

### Testing Capacity

Minnesota currently has a lab testing capacity of 12,000 tests/day. Healthcare systems plan to bring an additional 10,000 tests/day online within the next 5 weeks. The University of Minnesota/Mayo/MDH partnership will bring an additional 20,000 tests/day online in the next 4-5 weeks, so that collectively as many as 40,000 tests/day will be available in 5 weeks. This will allow Minnesota to expand testing to everyone defined by the new criteria and allow for additional testing based upon the discretion of health care providers.

## Testing Criteria: Additional Details

### Symptomatic People

Symptomatic people across the continuum of care (including hospitalized, long-term and transitional care and ambulatory care) and symptomatic healthcare workers.

### Asymptomatic People in Congregate Settings

Congregate living settings including long term care facilities, shelters, and prisons. Testing should be done according to guidance issued by MDH.

### Staff Working in High Risk Settings

Employees working in high risk areas, including those working in hospital/clinic settings where there is direct contact with COVID-19 patients, those working in long-term care facilities, shelter workers, and prison guards. It is likely that some people will need testing on a regular basis because of repeated high-risk exposures in the workplace. If a point-prevalence survey is done in a facility, staff should be included as part of the prioritization for the facility-wide testing. If not testing everyone, prioritize:

1. Symptomatic staff
2. Asymptomatic staff ending their quarantine period
3. Asymptomatic staff who work in a facility that has COVID-19 cases

### Cluster Investigations

Cluster investigations where groups of people are associated with a case of COVID-19, even if a direct contact isn't identified. This could include specific workplace-wide or facility-wide clusters implicated to have outbreaks of COVID-19. The testing approach should be done in consultation with MDH.

### Asymptomatic People Requiring Medical Care

Examples include: Patients planning to undergo an aerosol-generating procedure (procedure involving the airway or esophagus such as intubation, bronchoscopy, upper esophageal endoscopy, dental procedures, etc.), or patients undergoing other procedures that may be delayed based on testing results (patients undergoing procedures like chemotherapy, cardiac surgery, or other procedures in which COVID-19 infection may worsen outcome) or patients admitted to the hospital.

### Asymptomatic Mission-Critical Workers

Public utility workers essential to maintain critical infrastructure if requested by utility.

## For More Information

- [MDH Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)
- [CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage](#)
- Call MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.

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.