

Health Advisory:

COVID-19 Testing Criteria

March 7, 2020

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.health.mo.gov>.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is now using four types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons.

Health Alerts convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

Health Advisories provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

Health Guidances contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

Health Updates provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

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SUBJECT: COVID-19 Testing Criteria

*****Missouri health care providers and public health practitioners: Please contact your local public health agency, or the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) at 800-392-0272 (24/7), to immediately report any patients who meet the criteria for evaluation as a Patient Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV as noted in this Advisory.*****

As of March 7, 2020 Missouri has not seen any cases of COVID-19, but partners across the state in public health, healthcare, schools, and businesses are preparing to respond in the event that a case is identified. Many entities are also updating pandemic response plans in case sustained transmission occurs in Missouri. The Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) now has the capability to test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The purpose of this Health Advisory is to communicate to providers the clinical and epidemiological factors that determine which patients will be approved for COVID-19 testing in Missouri.

COVID-19 Test Availability

Federal partners in this response have announced that COVID-19 testing is now available through clinical laboratories for symptomatic patients, taking into account local epidemiology of the disease. As testing resources at the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory are limited, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services will be reserving testing for individuals most at risk for disease, or with severe illness without an alternative explanatory diagnosis, such as influenza. The full criteria chart is available as an Appendix to this Advisory and is available at

<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus-lpha/pdf/mo-pui-guidance.pdf>.

Before collecting and shipping specimens for COVID-19 testing, please contact your local public health agency, or the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) at 800-392-0272 (24/7), to immediately report any patients who meet the criteria for evaluation as a Patient Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV as noted in this Advisory.

After consultation and determination that the patient meets the criteria for testing, specimen collection and shipping information will be provided.

Specimen Collection

Guidelines and instructions for the proper collection, packaging and shipping of COVID-19 Specimens are available at; <https://health.mo.gov/lab/ncov.php>.

An instructional video is available at;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksGqd9qSNqA&feature=youtu.be>

Required Forms

The forms required to submit specimens to SPHL for COVID-19 testing, which are posted on the SPHL COVID-19 Testing website <https://health.mo.gov/lab/ncov.php>, are:

- 1) The *Human Infection with 2019 Novel Coronavirus Person Under Investigation (PUI) and Case Report Form*. This form summarizes the epidemiological and clinical picture for the patient and guides testing approval decisions. Once a form is submitted to DHSS for consideration, it will be transmitted to SPHL to verify that testing is approved.
- 2) The SPHL Virology Test Request Form. This form will need to be submitted with each specimen type.

Specimen Transport

The SPHL maintains a statewide courier system to deliver specimens to the laboratory. Information regarding the courier pickup locations and schedule can be found at; <https://health.mo.gov/lab/courierservices.php>.

Situational Awareness

The epidemiological picture of the international outbreak of COVID-19 changes daily. The World Health Organization (WHO) publishes Situation Reports (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>) daily that summarize international case counts and key developments. CDC also provides updates from the US perspective at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>.

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk	Laboratory Prioritization	Shipping
Fever ¹ or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including healthcare workers ² , who has had close contact ³ with a laboratory-confirmed ⁴ COVID19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset	Priority 1 -Testing conducted at SPHL same day, if received by noon	Shipped as soon as possible, Emergency courier may be utilized
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas ⁵ (see below) within 14 days of symptom onset	Priority 1 -Testing conducted at SPHL same day, if received by noon	Shipped as soon as possible, Emergency courier may be utilized
Fever ¹ with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza) ⁶	AND	No source of exposure has been identified	Priority 1 -Testing conducted at SPHL same day, if received by noon	Shipped as soon as possible, Emergency courier may be utilized
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza), not hospitalized or considered severe	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas ⁵ (see below) within 14 days of symptom onset	Priority 2 -Testing conducted when: 1) A Priority 1 specimen is received OR 2) Priority 2 specimens collected will use all lanes in test	Shipped on next available courier

Areas with Sustained (Ongoing) Transmission

International		US
China Iran Italy	Japan South Korea	King County/Seattle, Washington, USA

Footnotes

¹Fever may be subjective or confirmed

²For healthcare personnel, testing may be considered if there has been exposure to a person with suspected COVID-19 without laboratory confirmation. Because of their often extensive and close contact with vulnerable patients in healthcare settings, even mild signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat) of COVID-19 should be evaluated among potentially exposed healthcare personnel. Additional information is available in CDC's [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).³Close contact is defined as—

a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case

– or –

b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)

If such contact occurs while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection), criteria for PUI consideration are met.

Additional information is available in CDC's updated [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed COVID-19 or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings](#).

Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Considerations when assessing close contact include the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk) and the clinical symptoms of the person with COVID-19 (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient). Special consideration should be given to healthcare personnel exposed in healthcare settings as described in CDC's [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with COVID-19](#).

⁴Documentation of laboratory-confirmation of COVID-19 may not be possible for travelers or persons caring for COVID-19 patients in other countries.

⁵Affected areas are defined as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with at least a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all [COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#).

⁶Category includes single or clusters of patients with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) of unknown etiology in which COVID19 is being considered.