



COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Health Advisory

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Updated 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Person Under Investigation Testing Guidance

Current Situation

Federal, state, and local health officials are closely monitoring the expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (named "COVID-19") that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Worldwide there have been over 100,000 cases and 4,000 deaths. Nearly 100 countries and territories have confirmed cases with 46 countries reporting local transmission, including limited areas within the United States. There are currently no cases among Monterey County residents.

On March 5, the Monterey County Health Department's (MCHD's) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) received a limited number of tests from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On March 6, the MCHD PHL began accepting and testing specimens for COVID-19. The MCHD PHL will provide same day results Monday through Friday for specimens received by 10:00am. The need for weekend testing will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Due to the limited number of tests available, testing at the MCHD PHL will be limited to individuals who meet the criteria outlined below on page 2 of this Advisory. Testing priorities were developed to focus on the highest risk exposures and the severely ill in order to inform hospital infection control decisions, minimize unnecessary use of scarce personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, and rapidly identify cases who have potential for spreading the infection to large groups of individuals.

On March 5, Laboratory Corporation of America announced their approval and ability to test specimens for COVID-19. Quest Diagnostics similarly announced implementation of COVID-19 testing beginning on March 9. Lab Corp and Quest have not announced any criteria required for submitting specimens other than an order from a medical provider. Both commercial laboratories ask providers not to send patients with suspected COVID-19 to their draw stations. Neither commercial laboratory will collect specimens on suspected COVID-19

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patients. More information about Lab Corp's and Quest's COVID-19 testing process can be found on their websites: <https://www.labcorp.com/tests/139900/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-naa> and <https://newsroom.questdiagnostics.com/2020-03-05-Quest-Diagnostics-to-Launch-Coronavirus-Disease-2019-COVID-19-Test>.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

- **Post signage at facility points of entry** requesting individuals who have respiratory symptoms and have recently traveled internationally to alert staff and to don a mask.
 - Download signage in English, Spanish, and Chinese at the California Department of Public Health's website at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
 - Educate frontline reception staff about screening and infection control procedures.
- **Obtain a detailed travel history on all individuals presenting with respiratory symptoms.**
 - Because the list of countries with community transmission is changing rapidly, please visit the CDC's Travel Health Notice website (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>) for the most current list of international areas with sustained transmission.
 - Ascertain where patients have travelled during the 14 days prior to symptom onset.
- **Use clinical judgement to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.**
 - Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever (subjective or measured) and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness such as cough or difficulty breathing.
 - Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other common causes of respiratory infections such as influenza.
- **Isolate individuals with suspected COVID-19.**
 - Place a surgical mask on the patient.
 - Move the patient to an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR), if available. If no AIIR is available, place the patient in a single-patient room and close the door.
 - Staff entering the room should use standard, contact, and airborne precautions with the addition of eye protection (e.g., gloves, gown, N95 respirator, and a face shield or goggles).
 - In accordance with CalOSHA guidelines, PAPRs should be used for any aerosol-generating procedures.
 - Staff without access to PPE should stay at least 6 feet back from a suspected case.
- **Severely ill (e.g., hospitalized) patients and individuals with strong epidemiologic risk factors will be prioritized for testing at the MCHD PHL.** The MCHD PHL will test individuals for COVID-19 testing who meet the below criteria:

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
1. Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath).	AND	Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset, or

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Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
2. Fever and signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization.	AND	A history of travel from an area with community transmission of COVID-19 within 14 days of symptom onset, or
3. Fever with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., chest x-ray confirmed pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza).	AND	No source of exposure has been identified (no history of travel to affected geographic areas and no known contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient).

- **Immediately contact the MCHD if the symptomatic person meets one of these three criteria to request testing at the MCHD PHL.**
 - Call 831-755-4521 during normal business hours and 831-755-5100 after normal business hours. When calling the after-hours line, ask for the Hazardous Materials Team, who will transfer you to the on-call Health Officer.
 - Health Department staff will provide additional guidance and authorization to send specimens to the MCHD PHL.
- **Under the guidance of Monterey County Health Department staff, collect appropriate specimens.**
 - Obtain a nasopharyngeal swab (NP) AND oropharyngeal (OP) swab using synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts placed in separate vials of 2-3 mL viral transport media (VTM). Specimens should be placed in separate biohazard bags to avoid contamination if one vial leaks.
 - Public Health may request additional specimens such as sputum if the patient has a productive cough.
 - Specimens should be refrigerated at 2-8° C until they can be transferred to the MCHD PHL.
 - Specimens received at the MCHD PHL by 10:00am will be resulted the same business day afternoon. Specimens received between 10:00am and 1:00pm will be resulted by 9:00am the next business day. Specimens received after 1:00pm will be resulted the next business day afternoon.
- **Clinicians with patients who do not meet the above criteria for testing at the MCHD PHL can opt to collect specimens according to Lab Corp and/or Quest directions and submit them to commercial laboratories for COVID-19 testing.**
 - Clinicians should not send healthy or mildly symptomatic patients to the hospital ERs and MCHD for the sole purpose of collecting specimens for COVID-19 testing.
 - For information about how to submit a specimen to Lab Corp, Lab Corp's customer service line is 800-845-6167 or visit their website at www.labcorp.com.
 - For information about how to submit a specimen to Quest, Quest's customer service line is 866-697-8378 or visit their website at www.questdiagnostics.com.

Health care providers should also take the following steps now to prepare for local community transmission:

- **Monitor stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE)** and implement measures to assure appropriate PPE usage. Check with your PPE suppliers about potential wait lists and delivery delays for PPE. Ensure staff are trained on proper donning and doffing procedures, as well as fit tested for N95 use.
- **Discuss how your facility would process a suspected COVID-19 patient.** Inpatient facilities should plan for isolating special populations like pregnant women and pediatric patients.
- **Review your facility's emergency operations, surge, and continuity of operations plans.** Have preliminary planning discussions for operations with reduced staffing and higher patient volumes.
- **Review CDC guidance regularly** on evaluating patients, infection control strategies, PPE conservation strategies, and clinical management (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>).

For more information about testing, diagnosing, and reporting 2019-nCoV, please contact the Monterey County Health Department's Communicable Disease Unit at 831-755-4521. Additional information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Local case status and other information is available on the Monterey County Health Department's website at www.mtyhd.org/2019nCoV.