

Health Advisory: Testing Asymptomatic Persons for SARS-CoV-2

Minnesota Department of Health, Thurs, June 25 10:00 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: In addition to symptomatic persons, consider testing:

- Asymptomatic people with a known COVID-19 exposure.
- Asymptomatic people linked to an ongoing public health investigation in consultation with public health
- Asymptomatic people requiring medical care
- Asymptomatic mission-critical people

Background

This guidance is intended to assist with prioritization of SARS-CoV-2 testing and is not intended to limit testing. **Congregate settings** are referred to throughout this guidance and include (but are not limited to) acute care, assisted living, skilled nursing, group homes, long-term care facilities, substance use disorder treatment centers, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities.

The following groups are prioritized for SARS-CoV-2 testing.

1. Symptomatic People

Symptomatic people in any setting.

If PCR testing for SARS-CoV-2 is negative, symptomatic people should continue to self-isolate and follow setting-specific public health recommendations. A second test and additional medical consultation may be needed if symptoms do not improve.

2. Asymptomatic People with a Known COVID-19 Exposure

Exposure (within 6 feet \geq 15 minutes) to persons with confirmed COVID-19.

All close contacts should follow a 14-day quarantine period. CDC recommends that close contacts be PCR-tested for COVID-19. Even if the result is negative, these contacts should continue to quarantine for a full 14 days after last exposure and monitor for symptoms; infection could develop at any time during the quarantine period. Repeat testing at the end of the quarantine period may be recommended for staff or residents of congregate settings; refer to setting-specific testing guidance for additional information. Specific guidance is available for health care workers who have a health care exposure and these individuals should follow that guidance; it would apply if they have a community/household contact.

If testing resources are limited, providers may consider further prioritizing testing to those

contacts who would pose a significant risk of spread if they were infected or who are at high risk of severe disease. The following groups are considered highest priority:

- Hospitalized patients
- Healthcare personnel (HCP)
- First responders (e.g., EMS, law enforcement, firefighters)
- Individuals living, working or visiting congregate settings
- Member of a large household living in close quarters
- Individuals who live in households with a higher risk individual or who provide care in a household with a higher risk individual (Note: Household members who likely had extensive contact with a patient with COVID-19 should constitute the highest risk close contacts.)

Followed by:

- [Critical infrastructure workers*](#)
- Individuals 65 years of age and older
- Individuals with medical conditions
- Pregnant women
- Individuals living with someone who works in a congregate or healthcare setting

The complete prioritization guide can be found on the [CDC Close Contact Evaluation and Monitoring Hierarchy](#)

3. Asymptomatic Persons Linked to an Ongoing Public Health Investigation

Situations where one or more COVID-19 cases have been identified in a shared setting (e.g. long-term care facility, workplace, correctional facility). This type of testing should be done in consultation with MDH.

4. Asymptomatic People Requiring Medical Care

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

5. 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.