



ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Administration

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ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 UPDATE: TESTING March 12, 2020

We wanted to reach-out to help provide guidance around the recent changes to COVID-19 sampling and testing.

As of March 7, 2020, **providers no longer need to call Island County Public Health to authorize testing for COVID-19. Public Health only needs to authorize those samples being sent to the Public Health Lab. There are specific groups that are a high priority for the Public Health Lab (see below). All other samples should be sent to the commercial labs.**

Healthcare providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath). Though testing may not change clinical management, knowing patients' COVID-19 status will help public health track COVID-19 and better respond to the outbreak.

In general, we do not recommend testing asymptomatic persons. However, you can consider testing asymptomatic persons if they have been in close contact with a confirmed case.

If COVID-19 is being considered, whether testing or not, please provide patients with the following three documents:

[Patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#)

[Patients who were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case](#)

[Unexposed patients with COVID-19 symptoms](#)

Testing at Commercial Laboratories

In general, healthcare providers should send specimens for COVID-19 testing to commercial laboratories. Please be sure to include the patient's name, date of birth, address and phone number. The Washington State Insurance Commissioner has ordered all Washington health insurers to waive deductibles and copays for COVID-19 testing. Labs that will test:

UW – Yes.

Lab Corps – Yes. Oak Harbor office will send specimen to Burlington.

Quest (Seattle) – Yes.

Public Health Lab (Shoreline) – Yes. Limited capacity. Requires approval from Public Health Dept. See note below.

DOD, Madigan – Yes after being cleared through DOD.

Shipping specifics (per Quest): Time from specimen obtainment to reaching lab must be **no longer than 72 hours** (i.e. do not obtain specimen on a Friday). **Specimen must be boxed and shipped with cold**

packs. If choosing to use **Fed Ex** direct delivery, use **dry ice (-70 degrees)**. Some labs (Quest) have couriers that will pick-up specimens.

Testing at the Public Health Laboratories

As noted above, specimens from specific patient groups can be sent to the Washington State Public Health Lab:

- Healthcare workers
- Employed in public safety occupation (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Part of an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, shelters)
- Patients with no health insurance
- Specific request by Local Health Officer

If seeking testing at the Public Health Laboratories, call your local health jurisdiction (LHJ) with the above information to discuss the case. If possible, please call 8 AM – 4:30 PM.

Specimen Collection and PPE

Collect sample using **synthetic tip swabs** (ex. Dacron, Nylon, Polyester) with non-wooden shaft. For specific details on the two swabs needed for testing please refer to DOH [guidance](#) and/or the commercial lab you are submitting to for testing.

PPE for Sampling:

Full face shield; N-95 mask (but industrial masks approved for construction are acceptable); goggles for added protection, or if no face shield available; gloves; and gown. The patient should wear a mask as well (a surgical mask is acceptable).

CDC updated recommendations for PPE for the care of patients with known or suspected COVID-19 based on shortages of supplies. Facemasks are an acceptable alternative when the supply of respirators cannot meet the demand. Available respirators should be prioritized for procedures likely to generate respiratory aerosols, which would pose the highest exposure risk to health care providers. The recommendations also include prioritization considerations for other PPE and facility staffing and space.

Procedure for Sampling:

Pull the patient's mask down to collect the samples while standing at the patient's side. Avoid being directly in front of him/her (away from the direct line of fire, should s/he cough).

Supplies for Sampling:

Please DEM@islandcountywa.gov if you are struggling to order swabbing or PPE supplies. Members of our team may be able to request certain items from the State and/or help locate local resources. Many materials are in short supply and your organization would still be required to provide funding for supplies.