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**LAC DPH Health Advisory:  
COVID-19 Clinical Laboratory Testing,  
Reporting, PPE, HCW Exposure Monitoring**  
March 6, 2020



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*This message is intended for all healthcare providers practicing in Los Angeles County.  
Please distribute as appropriate.*

### **Key Messages**

- Clinical laboratories have announced COVID-19 testing is now or will soon be available, thus expanding testing to a wider group of symptomatic patients.
- Healthcare workers must wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is appropriate for the mode of COVID-19 specimen collection. High risk aerosol generating procedures require a higher level of PPE than do nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal sampling (see PPE for Specimen Collection).
- The Governor has directed all commercial and Medi-Cal health plans to immediately reduce cost-sharing to zero for all medically necessary COVID-19 testing and visits.
- Healthcare providers should continue to contact Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) to arrange for COVID-19 testing for those patients meeting the LAC DPH PHL COVID-19 testing criteria (included below) as these are high risk patients and need a rapid public health response if confirmed to be infected.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have released new guidance simplifying healthcare worker contact/exposure monitoring.
- Healthcare providers and laboratories must report all positive COVID-19 laboratory results from clinical laboratories to LAC DPH (see Reporting).

### **Situation**

LAC DPH has recently confirmed 4 new cases of COVID-19 bringing the new total to 11 confirmed cases in LA County. All confirmed cases are being isolated and close contacts will be quarantined. Currently, LAC DPH is publishing new cases on the [press release](#) section of the LAC DPH coronavirus [website](#).

Yesterday afternoon, LabCorp [announced](#) that their novel coronavirus (COVID-19), nucleic acid amplification (NAA) test is now available for ordering by healthcare providers. Quest Laboratory [intends](#) to provide testing for COVID-19 as soon as Monday, March 9. The LabCorp COVID-19 test is for provider-collected specimens (nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport medium, bronchial washings or bronchoalveolar lavage specimens) from symptomatic patients who meet current [CDC](#) clinical criteria. As this expands the opportunity for testing to broader settings including outpatient, it is critical that healthcare workers wear appropriate PPE for specimen collection.

In addition, yesterday Governor Gavin Newsom directed all commercial and Medi-Cal health plans to immediately reduce cost-sharing to zero for all medically necessary screening and testing for the COVID-19 in the [All Plan Letter](#). This includes waiving cost-sharing for emergency room, urgent care, or provider office visits when the purpose of the visit is to be screened and tested for COVID-19.

Healthcare providers are advised to check the LAC DPH COVID-19 Healthcare Provider [website](#) for the most up to date guidance and resources.

### **Actions Requested of Providers**

- **Screen patients for any signs or symptoms of febrile respiratory illness.** If present, healthcare workers should don surgical masks. The patient should be instructed to wear a surgical mask and be placed in a private room with the door closed or separated from others by at least 6 feet.
- **Implement infection control precautions for patient interview and exam:**
  - Patient should be in a private room with the door closed and should continue to wear the surgical mask through all healthcare worker encounters.
  - Healthcare providers should wear a surgical mask, gloves, and eye protection for the history and basic exam. A gown is recommended.
- **Determine if the patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.** Follow the LAC DPH COVID-19 [Provider Checklist](#).
  - If the patient meets the LAC DPH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) testing criteria (see below), contact LAC DPH to approve testing and arrange for courier. Weekdays 8:30am–5pm: call 213-240-7941. After-hours: call 213-974-1234 and ask for the physician on call.
  - If the patient does not meet PHL testing criteria but has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 per [CDC clinical criteria](#), specimens can be collected and submitted to the appropriate clinical laboratory with COVID-19 testing capability. Follow the clinical laboratory guidance for appropriate specimen collection and pick-up.
  - Healthcare workers must wear the appropriate PPE for the mode of COVID-19 specimen collection (see PPE for Specimen Collection).
- **Instruct non-hospitalized patients being tested for COVID-19 to self-isolate.** Patients should follow home care [instructions](#) until their test result is negative or until they are told by LAC DPH or their healthcare provider that they are no longer infectious.
- **Report any positive COVID-19 results received from clinical laboratories** (see reporting).

### **Actions for Healthcare Facilities**

- Consider creating alternative testing/triage locations in anticipation of a potential increase in COVID-19 cases in LA County. California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is encouraging facilities to consider increasing surge capacity for the evaluation of patients for suspected COVID-19 illness. See CDPH All

Facilities Letter (AFL): [Guidance for Healthcare Facilities on Preparing for Coronavirus](#) and [Increased Patient Accommodations Including Medical Surge Tent Use](#) .

- Follow the CDC's revised simpler [guidance](#) for healthcare worker monitoring after exposure to patients with COVID-19.
- Continue to maintain HIPAA compliance as it relates to persons suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19.

## **COVID-19 Clinical Presentation and CDC Testing Guidance**

Clinical presentation among reported cases of COVID-19 varies in severity from mild to severe illness. Currently it is believed that many people with COVID-19 have mild, self-limited disease. Risk factors for severe illness are still being evaluated, although older patients and those with chronic medical conditions appear to be at higher risk for severe illness. Information on the clinical presentation of COVID-19 can be found in the CDC's Interim [Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).

The CDC suggests testing for patients with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who have epidemiological risk factors. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza. Epidemiologic factors that may help guide decisions on whether to test include: any persons, including healthcare workers, who have had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset, or a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset. This criteria is likely to change so visit the CDC [Criteria to Guide Evaluation of PUI for COVID-19](#) for the most current CDC testing guidance.

## LAC DPH PHL COVID-19 Testing Criteria

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk Factors
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath)	and	Any person (including healthcare workers) who in the last 14 days before symptom onset has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a community-acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) <b>requiring hospitalization</b>	and	A history of travel from affected geographic areas* in the last 14 days before symptom onset
Fever <b>with</b> severe acute community acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g. pneumonia, ARDS) <b>requiring ICU care</b> without alternative explanatory diagnosis. (Must have negative rapid influenza/ RSV tests; and a negative molecular respiratory panel if this testing is available at the facility)	and	No source of exposure has been identified
<p>*Affected Geographic Areas with Widespread or Sustained Community Transmission China, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea. <i>Last updated February 28, 2020</i></p> <p>CDC defines affected areas as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with <u>at least</u> a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all <a href="#">COVID-19 Travel Health Notices</a>.</p>		

### PPE for Specimen Collection

Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal sampling: these procedures should be conducted wearing gloves, eye protection, and either a surgical mask or N95 respirator. Gowns are recommended.

High risk aerosol generating procedures such as sputum induction or bronchoscopy require a higher level of PPE: these procedures require gowning, gloving, N95 respirator and eye protection.

These are described in the CDC Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>

## Reporting

### Los Angeles County DPH Acute Communicable Disease Control:

Positive COVID-19 lab results from clinical labs (not PHL) must be reported by healthcare providers within one day.

- Complete and fax a Medical Provider COVID-19 Report [form](#) to 888-397-3778 or 213-482-5508 or call 888-397-3993.
- For consultation call 213-240-7941.

### Long Beach Health and Human Services:

- Weekdays 8am-5pm: call 562-570-4302.
- After hours: call the Duty Officer at 562-500-5537.

### Pasadena Public Health Department:

- To report a case of COVID-19, fill out the [COVID-19 Report Form](#) here and fax to 626-744-6115, **and** call 626-744-6089 [Weekdays 8am-5pm (closed every other Friday) or after hours call 626-744-6043].

## Additional Resources

- **LAC DPH coronavirus website**  
<http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- **LAC DPH coronavirus webpage for Health Professionals:**  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019.htm>
- **CDC coronavirus main website**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>  
**CDC coronavirus travel health notices**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>
- **California Department of Public Health:**  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- **World Health Organization:** <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

This communication was sent by Sharon Balter, MD, Director, Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

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