April 20, 2020

Significant recent changes are highlighted in blue text

**Guidance for providers regarding COVID-19 testing**

Given growing availability of commercial testing options and less dependence on the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) for testing, providers now have access to more expanded testing based on clinical judgment. Public Health approval is not needed for this testing.

The charge of OSPHL requires prioritized testing for certain groups. Criteria for testing at OSPHL have been revised and are described below.

**It is recommended that people without symptoms and those with symptoms that do not necessitate medical evaluation call their provider to discuss symptoms and whether they need to be evaluated.** Individuals with mild symptoms that do not necessitate medical evaluation should remain at home until 72 hours after any fever or cough resolve. People with mild or moderate COVID-19-like illness who seek testing risk exposing others in healthcare settings, including members of the public, other patients, and healthcare workers. For individuals with mild symptoms who present for care, testing is at the discretion of the provider.

Evaluation and testing of such people in a healthcare setting consumes resources that may become extremely limited, including personal protective equipment (PPE), swabs and viral transport media used to collect diagnostic specimens, and ties up clinical resources, including healthcare staff and rooms.

**Testing at clinical laboratories**

1. Clinicians can order COVID-19 testing at their discretion through clinical laboratories, including some Oregon hospital laboratories as well as commercial reference labs such as LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics.
   a. Clinicians do not need to routinely notify the local public health authority (LPHA) or the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) when evaluating patients with respiratory illness or ordering COVID-19 testing.
   b. Because COVID-19 and influenza (which is treatable) can present in similar fashion, while influenza is circulating, an influenza test should be ordered prior to ordering COVID-19 testing.
   c. Employers are responsible for making testing available to their healthcare workers who should be tested according to the recommendations below.

2. Recommendations for COVID-19 testing at clinical laboratories: people in the following groups **with fever, cough, or dyspnea:**
   a. Healthcare workers and first responders (EMS, public safety workers)
b. Residents, staff, children, or other people in a care facility or group living setting (e.g., healthcare facility, residential care facility, school, child care, or corrections). When clinical laboratories have sufficient testing capacity, people in these settings without symptoms can be considered for testing.

c. Workers who provide direct care or service in multiple group facilities or who provide in-home services (e.g., hospice care workers, physical or occupational therapists, in-home personal care workers, etc.)

d. Essential front-line service workers who have regular contact with large numbers of people (e.g., those working in grocery stores, pharmacies, food service, transportation, delivery, and other critical infrastructure services)

e. Patients 60 years of age or older

f. Patients with underlying medical conditions, including, but not limited to hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, lung disease, and immunocompromising conditions

g. People who identify as Black, African-American, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, or as having a disability; data indicate that these communities are at higher risk for COVID-19 and associated complications due to longstanding social and health inequities

h. Pregnant women

i. Patients with worsening symptoms

j. Patients who had contact with a suspect or lab-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of their symptom onset

3. Patients presenting with respiratory symptoms should be masked. Providers should use standard, contact, and droplet precautions with eye protection for the evaluation or treatment of a patient with respiratory symptoms.

4. If a patient does not have a clinical need to be sent to an emergency department or a hospital, do not send them there.

a. Patients with respiratory symptoms should be advised to self-isolate at home until 72 hours after both fever and cough (if present) resolve.

b. Discuss with symptomatic patients a plan to seek appropriate medical care should symptoms worsen.

5. Avoid any aerosol-generating procedures, including respiratory therapy treatments (e.g., nebulized medications), that are not immediately required for patient care. Note that nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, oropharyngeal (OP) swabs, nasal swabs, and nasopharyngeal washes are not considered aerosol-generating procedures.

Testing at Oregon State Public Health Laboratory

1. Expedited testing approval for COVID-19 testing at the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory.

   a. A patient who meets all of the following criteria will be approved for testing:

      i. Clinical need for admission to an inpatient facility;
      ii. Evidence of viral lower respiratory infection; and
      iii. While influenza is circulating, an influenza test ordered.
b. For such patients, clinicians must submit an electronic request for testing through a Confidential Oregon Morbidity Report, found at healthoregon.org/howtoreport:
   i. Click the button for “Online Morbidity Report.”
   ii. Select COVID-19.
   iii. Answer all three clinical questions.
   iv. Complete all of the requested information.
   v. Public health officials will review the electronic submission for record-keeping.

c. For such patients, you do not need to call your local public health authority or Oregon Health Authority for approval.

d. Collect, package and ship the specimen, along with a completed Virology/Immunology Test Request form. See Sections 4 and 5 for details.

2. Residents, staff, children, or other people in a care facility or group living setting (e.g., healthcare facility, residential care facility, school, child care, or corrections) and workers who provide direct care or service in multiple group facilities or who provide in-home services (e.g. hospice care workers, physical or occupational therapists, in-home personal care workers, etc.) will be tested for COVID-19 at OSPHL according to the following criteria:
   a. OSPHL will test any person with symptoms (fever, cough, or dyspnea) in care facility or group living settings and, as capacity allows, may consider testing asymptomatic people as well.
   b. OSPHL will test people with symptoms (fever, cough, or dyspnea) who provide direct care or service in multiple group facilities or who provide in-home services.
   c. Oregon law requires reporting of any cluster of illness to the LPHA. Wait for public health approval of testing before submitting specimens to OSPHL.
   d. Collect, package and ship the specimen, along with a completed Virology/Immunology Test Request form. See Sections 4 and 5 for details.

3. Patients seen at tribal health centers, NARA Indian Health Clinic, and Chemawa Indian Health Center who have fever, cough, or dyspnea may be tested for COVID-19 at OSPHL.

4. Collecting specimens
   a. Specimens should be collected under appropriate infection prevention precautions. For information on recommended infection prevention for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, including PPE use and a list of aerosol-generating procedures, see OHA’s Provisional Guidance: Clinical Care and Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control for COVID-19 at healthoregon.org/hcpcovid19.
   b. OSPHL will test one specimen per patient.
      i. Lower respiratory specimens (bronchoalveolar lavage fluid, endotracheal aspirate, or sputum) are preferred if feasible. Otherwise, upper respiratory specimens are acceptable, with nasopharyngeal swab preferred; oropharyngeal swab, nasal mid-turbinate swab, bilateral anterior nares swab, or nasal wash are also acceptable.
      ii. If more than one specimen is received, OSPHL will test only the highest-preference specimen.
c. Refrigerate specimens (2°–8° C) until they can be sent to OSPHL. If >72 hours are anticipated for specimen storage and transport prior to testing, freeze at -70°C or below.

5. Sending specimens and forms
      i. Complete the form. In the “OTHER/MOLECULAR” section, mark the checkbox indicating “Other,” and type or write in “2019-nCoV” or “COVID-19” on the line provided.
      ii. Incorrectly completed or incomplete test request forms cause a delay in testing.
      iii. Transport specimens at refrigerated temperatures (2°–8° C).
      iv. Send specimens so that they will be received at OSPHL during expanded business hours:
         1. Monday–Friday, between 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
         2. Saturday and Sunday, between 10:00 AM and 12:00 noon.