

# Alaska Public Health Alert

## Updated Procedures for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing in Alaska

March 21, 2020

### Summary

The purpose of this alert is to update Alaska health care providers about new procedures and strategies for managing COVID-19 testing in Alaska given the ongoing global and national COVID-19 outbreak.

### Key Points

- Testing supplies are running low nationwide. Until this shortage is addressed, health care providers should prioritize testing to specific groups as per the updated table below.
- The Alaska State Public Health Laboratory (ASPHL) is running specimens 7 days a week.
  - STAT testing is generally not being offered.
- CDC guidance for discontinuation of home isolation for persons with COVID-19, available [here](#).
- *ONLY a nasopharyngeal swab* is needed for testing. Further CDC testing guidance is available [here](#).
  - Providers must fill out a [COVID-19 Report Form](#) for each patient, regardless of the testing lab.
- Health care providers **do not** need to call the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) to approve testing.
- Advise all persons who have travelled out-of-state in the past 14 days to adhere to the social distancing guidance in the [Alaska COVID-19 Out of State Travel Alert](#).
- SOE guidance on what outpatients should do if they have COVID-19 is available [here](#).
- FDA guidance on specimen transport media and swabs is available [here](#).
- Call SOE at **907-269-8000 or 800-478-0084** (after-hours) regarding outpatients who will not be able to isolate in their own homes (e.g., homeless persons or travelers from out of town).

### Testing

Patients who have a [clinically compatible illness](#) (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) AND at least one of the following criteria should be considered for testing:

Priority Level	Patient Criteria	Send Specimens to
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospitalized</li></ul>	ASPHL*
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lives in a long-term care facility</li></ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health care worker or first responder (e.g., police, fire, paramedic)</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known close contact to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel in the past 14 days to a location where community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring<sup>±</sup></li> </ul>	
<i>Individuals not meeting any of the above criteria:</i>		
Medium <sup>†</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An outpatient who is at increased risk for serious illness (i.e., age ≥60 years or has one or more <a href="#">select chronic medical conditions</a>, such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, immunocompromised)</li> </ul>	Commercial laboratory
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any other patient as determined by clinical discretion</li> </ul>	
DO NOT TEST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asymptomatic persons</li> </ul>	DO NOT TEST

\*ASPHL laboratory supplies are limited, so please follow the preferred laboratory guidance closely.

<sup>±</sup>This situation is rapidly changing, please refer to [CDC](#), [WHO](#), and other online resources to make this determination.

<sup>†</sup>Clinical discretion required.

## Specimen Collection Information

- ASPHL: details on [page 23 of the Laboratory Test Directory](#); instructions for obtaining a NP swab on [page 95](#). Specimens are batched current turnaround time is 1–3 days.
- Consult individual commercial labs for specific instructions.

Please check [SOE's COVID-19 website](#) and [CDC's COVID-19 website](#) frequently for updates.

You are subscribed to the AK Public Health Alert Network for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This information has recently been updated, and is now available.

- [COVID\\_SOEreportform.pdf](#)

This message is sent to you as a service of the State of Alaska DHSS, Division of Public Health, through the Section of Epidemiology, 3601 C Street, Suite 540, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, (907) 269-8000. The Section of Epidemiology maintains a 24-hour Emergency Number, 1-800-478-0084. Internet site: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi>.

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