



Provisional guidance for health systems regarding approval of COVID-19 testing

March 5, 2020

National guidance just expanded the criteria for COVID-19 testing, deferring the testing decision in large part to clinicians. Currently, however, the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) is the only laboratory in Oregon with the capability for this testing; and OSPHL has capacity to test only 80 specimens per day.

Until OSPHL's COVID-19 testing capacity increases, or testing becomes available at clinical laboratories, we have established criteria for testing at OSPHL and the accompanying guidance for clinicians below.

Inpatient facilities

1. Criteria for COVID-19 testing
 - a. A patient must meet **all** three criteria:
 - i. Clinical need for admission to your facility;
 - ii. Evidence of viral lower respiratory infection; and
 - iii. Tested negative for influenza
 - b. If a patient meets all three criteria, with proper documentation their specimens will be approved for testing.
 - c. You **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 the 3 clinical questions.
 - iv. Complete all of the requested information.
 - v. Public health officials will review the electronic submission for record-keeping.
 - d. A completed Virology/Immunology Test Request form **MUST** accompany the specimen. See Section 3.a. for details.
 - e. You do **not** need to call your local public health authority for approval.
 - f. You do **not** need to call the Oregon Health Authority for approval.
2. Collecting specimens
 - a. Specimens must be collected under airborne precautions.
 - i. The patient should be in an Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR), if available.
 - ii. The healthcare provider should be wearing full airborne precaution personal protective equipment, including a respirator (N95 or better) and eye protection.
 - b. OSPHL will test 1–2 specimens per patient.
 - i. Specimen priority in descending order is bronchoalveolar lavage fluid or endotracheal aspirate, then sputum, then nasopharyngeal swab, then oropharyngeal swab.
 - ii. If more than 2 specimens are received, OSPHL will test only the highest-priority ones.
 - iii. Please avoid sending only oropharyngeal swabs.
 - c. Refrigerate specimens (2°–8° C) until they can be sent to OSPHL.

3. Sending specimens and forms
 - a. Complete specimen collection guidance and the Test Request Form are available at www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/LABORATORYSERVICES/Pages/COVID-19.aspx
 - i. Complete the OSPHL Virology/Immunology Test Request 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. Transport specimens at refrigerated temperatures (2°–8° C).
 - iii. Send specimens so as to be received at OSPHL during normal 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.
 - b. In the comments section of the form, clearly indicate that the patient meets all three criteria described in 1.a. above.
 - c. Send specimens so as to be received at OSPHL during normal business hours.
4. Health care of patients being tested
 - a. Use airborne precautions when caring for patients being tested until one of the following criteria is met:
 - i. Supplies for airborne precautions are exhausted.
 - ii. The test comes back negative for COVID-19.
 - b. After supplies are exhausted or a test is negative, use droplet precautions when caring for those patients.
 - c. Prioritize supplies for the sickest patients and for performing aerosol-generating procedures.

Outpatient clinics

1. Due to limited testing capacity at this time, COVID-19 testing is not routinely available for patients presenting for care in the outpatient setting.
2. 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.
3. If a patient does not have a **clinical** need to be sent to the emergency department or a hospital, do not send them there. You do not need to routinely notify the LPHA or OHA when evaluating patients with respiratory illness.
 - a. These patients should be advised to self-isolate at home until 24 hours after their symptoms resolve.
 - b. Discuss a plan to seek appropriate medical care should symptoms worsen.
4. Avoid any aerosol-generating procedures, including respiratory specimen collection and respiratory therapy treatments (i.e. nebulized medications) that are not immediately required for patient care.
5. With some commercial laboratories beginning to offer testing, we know you might seek testing outside of OSPHL. Please remember that all of the specimens for testing should be collected under the precautions described in 2.a. in the “Inpatient facilities” section.