

**PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
2020 – PAHAN – 487 – 03-14-ALT**



Alert: Interim COVID 19 Specimen Collection and Testing Guidance

DATE:	3/14/2020
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Interim COVID 19 Specimen Collection and Testing Guidance
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Alert”, conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- For testing through DOH, consultation with DOH at **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)** or your local health department is required.
- Call DOH for consultation for the following patients: symptomatic contacts of a confirmed case, symptomatic residents of a congregate care setting, symptomatic healthcare workers, and hospitalized patients with relevant symptoms and no alternative diagnosis
- For patients that do not meet the above criteria, consultation with DOH is not required and can be tested through a commercial laboratory.
- Patients should not be sent to a state health center for sample collection without explicit prior approval and coordination with DOH.
- For outpatients being tested at DOH, **ONLY** nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs should be collected for testing. For specimens being submitted to commercial laboratories, follow the commercial laboratory instructions.
- COVID-19 is a reportable condition in Pennsylvania and must be reported to DOH.

DOH is requiring consultation prior to SARS-CoV-2 testing at the public health laboratory. Specifically, providers who are assessing:

- known contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases,
- patients in congregate care settings (e.g., skilled nursing facilities, long term care facilities),
- patients admitted to a hospital, and
- healthcare workers

should contact DOH at **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)** to have these patients tested at BOL.

For providers who are treating patients who do not meet those criteria, commercial tests can be ordered without DOH consultation. If you would like a clinical consultation with DOH, please call **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**. In the event DOH does not recommend COVID-19 testing but you still believe your patient should be tested, please order a test through a commercial laboratory.

Attached to this PA-HAN are a fact sheet and an infographic that can be displayed in your office providing this testing information to you and your patients.

COVID-19 is a reportable condition in Pennsylvania. All positive commercial laboratory tests **MUST** be reported to DOH.

Specimen collection is the responsibility of the ordering provider. Presently, we are unaware of any commercial laboratory that is conducting specimen collection on their premises. Patients should not be sent to a state health center for sample collection without explicit prior approval and coordination with DOH.

For outpatients being tested at DOH, only submit NP swabs. For inpatients being tested at DOH, submit NP and sputum (if possible) specimens. For commercial laboratory testing, please follow the specimen collection instructions provided by the laboratory.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of March 14, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.
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