

HEALTH ADVISORY



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

To: Physicians and other health care providers

Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182
Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599
Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

Steven Krager, MD, MPH

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182
Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599
Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

Alert categories:

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; no immediate action necessary.

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Summary

COVID-19 activity is increasing regionally at an accelerating pace. As more disease transmission occurs, testing rates will need to increase in order accurately track case counts. Providers should test all persons with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, including very mild symptoms. Also test asymptomatic close contacts of cases, or asymptomatic individuals who work at a business with cases.

Please continue to provide up-to-date COVID-19 education to patients based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Washington Department of Health (DOH) guidance.

Close contacts to a confirmed COVID-19 case should quarantine at home for 14 days after their last exposure to the case, regardless of whether they have a negative SARS-CoV-2 test.

Cloth face coverings are safe for most people 2 years and older and now required to be worn by everyone 5 years and older when in indoor public spaces statewide.

Requested actions

Updated testing guidance

Providers should be aware of updated testing guidance from DOH which stresses the importance of increased COVID-19 testing at this time.

Health care providers should test all patients with new onset of symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19, regardless of their age or health status. Patients should be tested as soon as possible after seeking care, ideally within 24 hours. If health care providers are unable to provide testing within this timeframe, patients should be referred to another testing site. Broad testing is strongly encouraged at this time.

COVID-19 patients may present with:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Rapidly testing all patients with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 is critical to identify and isolate cases, quarantine their contacts, and suppress community spread. Health care providers should also test all persons, regardless of symptoms, who report they are close contacts of a case. A close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic clients, 2 days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. Close contacts that test negative for COVID-19 still need to remain in quarantine for 14 days after their last date of exposure.

See further guidance here:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Interim-2019NovelCoronavirusQuicksheetProviders.pdf>

Isolation and quarantine guidance

Providers should continue to provide the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC and DOH to patients regarding COVID-19 isolation and quarantine requirements in the outpatient setting.

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

Persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then the symptom-based or test-based strategy should be used. Note: because symptoms cannot be used to gauge where these individuals are in the course of their illness, it is possible that the duration of viral shedding could be longer or shorter than 10 days after their first positive test.

Those in isolation due to COVID-19 should stay in a specific “sick room” or area and away from other people or pets and use a separate bathroom, if available.

Persons who are close contacts to a confirmed COVID-19 case are expected to quarantine at home for 14 days after their **last exposure** to a contagious case. This quarantine period does not change if a person has a negative SARS-CoV-2 test. This is because the person could develop COVID-19 further into their quarantine period.

Cloth face coverings

Please educate patients on the importance of wearing cloth face coverings. Everyone 5 years and older is required to wear face coverings in all indoor public places (including businesses). In outdoor public places, face coverings are required where 6 feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.

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Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control.

Face shields **are not** a replacement for a cloth face mask.

The statewide face covering requirement includes exemptions for those younger than 5 (children younger than 2 should never wear face coverings), and for persons with a medical condition, mental health condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance. Documentation of such medical conditions is not required.

The state health order requiring face coverings is available here: https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Secretary_of_Health_Order_20-03_Statewide_Face_Coverings.pdf

Additional information about face coverings is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

Background

The rate of new COVID-19 cases in the region has dramatically increased over the last two weeks. Infection rates are now higher than at any other time during the pandemic.

Additional resources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>
- <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Interim-2019NovelCoronavirusQuicksheetProviders.pdf>

Thank you for your partnership.

Local health jurisdiction	Phone	Fax
Clark County Public Health	564.397.8182	564.397.8080
Cowlitz County Health Department	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143

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