

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.

To subscribe or unsubscribe from this listserv, email: Tippy.Hartford@clark.wa.gov.

Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Washington Department of Health and local public health departments continue to closely monitor and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Washington has seen cases in 12 counties, indicating that community transmission is occurring. Though testing may not change clinical management, knowing patients' COVID-19 status will help Public Health characterize the spectrum of illness, track the distribution of COVID-19 and enhance our response to the outbreak.

Background

Early reports suggest person-to-person transmission most commonly happens during close exposure to a person infected with COVID-19, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity. The contribution of small respirable particles, sometimes called aerosols or droplet nuclei, to close proximity transmission is currently uncertain. However, airborne transmission from person-to-person over long distances is unlikely. Major distributors in the United States have reported shortages of PPE, specifically N95 respirators, facemasks, and gowns. If N95 masks are not readily available, updated CDC guidance allows for use of regular surgical mask along with gloves, gown, and eye protection (goggles or face shield) when caring for patients with known or suspected COVID-19.

Updated Infection Control Guidance

When caring for patients with known or suspected COVID-19, eye protection, gown, and gloves continue to be recommended. Based on PPE supplies, regular facemasks are an acceptable alternative when the supply chain of N95 respirators or PAPRs cannot meet the demand. During this time, available N95 respirators should be prioritized for aerosolizing procedures, which would pose the highest exposure risk to a health care worker.

- [Further CDC infection control guidance can be found here](#)
- [Signage reflecting special droplet/contact precautions](#)

Testing Guidance

As directed below, please send specimens to the University of Washington, commercial laboratories, or the Washington State Public Health laboratories. Please do not send

specimens or patients to public health departments as we do not perform tests for COVID-19

1. Testing at UW or Commercial Laboratories

In general, health care providers should send specimens for COVID-19 testing to UW or other commercial laboratories offering COVID-19 testing. There are currently **no restrictions** on who can be tested for COVID-19 through commercial testing or UW. Though testing may not change clinical management, test data contain critical information that Public Health needs to respond to this outbreak.

The following patients with COVID-19 symptoms are considered **highest priority** for testing:

- Health care workers, patients involved in an illness cluster, patients with severe lower respiratory illness, patients older than 60 years, patients with underlying medical conditions, pregnant women, patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)

Please see each laboratory's test menu for specimen collection instructions, submission forms, and shipping requirements. Please include the patient's name, date of birth, address and phone number. The Washington State Insurance Commissioner has ordered all Washington health insurers to waive deductibles and copays for COVID-19 testing. Providers will need to confirm with their lab services what their internal processes are for ordering this test through UW or other commercial labs.

- [Information on how to order through UW can be found here.](#)
- [Information on how to order through Quest can be found here.](#)
- [Information on how to order through LabCorp can be found here.](#)

2. Testing at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories

Testing at the state public health lab is currently restricted to health care providers, patients in public safety, patients in an illness cluster and those without insurance. Please consider developing processes to allow testing for patients without access to regular medical care.

To request permission to test for COVID-19 through the WA Public Health Lab:

Health care providers should call their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) to determine whether a patient meets these restrictions and warrants testing through the Washington State Public Health Lab. See contact numbers below.

Specimen collection guidance:

- <https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>

If COVID-19 is being considered please provide patients with the following guidance documents so that they know how to best prevent the spread of infection to other people.

- [Patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#)
- [Patients who were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case](#)
- [Unexposed patients with COVID-19 symptoms](#)

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Outbreak Update

The outbreak of COVID-19 has now been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization.

The risk of exposure is increasing for people who live in communities in Washington State with reported spread of COVID-19. As of 3/12/2020 there have been 366 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington State, including 29 deaths.

For up to date information about the Washington COVID-19 outbreak, visit:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus> .

Additional information is also available on the CDC's COVID-19 website,

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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