



Health Advisory: Prioritizing Testing for COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus Infection

March 27, 2020

CDC last published guidance on COVID-19 testing March 9th offering broad indications for testing based on clinician judgment. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>).

Since then, testing has become more available through public health, commercial, and hospital laboratories, however testing resources cannot meet demand.

SFDPH aims to utilize testing to prevent morbidity and mortality particularly in vulnerable populations, preserve valuable health care resources, and slow transmission within the community. As such, SFDPH recommends the following testing priorities for all San Francisco providers.

Testing at the San Francisco Public Health Laboratory will be prioritized for persons with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who are:

- Hospitalized patients
- Residents and staff in skilled nursing or long-term care facilities
- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Persons living in congregate settings such as shelters, navigation centers, single-room occupancy hotels (SRO), or correctional facilities
- Outpatient hemodialysis patients
- Healthcare personnel and first responders
- Part of a cluster of cases of pneumonia in a congregate setting that may not be listed above
- Fatal cases with unexplained pneumonia
- Close contacts to confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection

Contact SFDPH Communicable Disease Control & Prevention by phone at 415-554-2830 7 days a week from 8am-8pm to request a case number to send specimens to SFPHL.

If testing through commercial and hospital laboratories, in addition to the priority groups above, the following additional persons with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 may be prioritized for testing:

- Aged 60 years and above
- Immunocompromised, including patients with HIV or following organ transplantation

If resources further allow:

- Other symptomatic persons

There is no need to contact SFDPH when arranging testing via non-public health laboratories.

Persons with mild respiratory symptoms who do not otherwise need medical care and who are not in one of the above groups should be lowest priority for COVID-19 testing in the current environment of limited personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing resources. However, testing could be considered for these individuals as testing access improves and alternative testing sites are available



(such as drive-through testing models) that conserve PPE. Ill persons should stay home and away from others until there has been no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, there has been an improvement in respiratory symptoms for at least 3 days, AND at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. Individuals who still have a cough after this period should continue to wear a facemask when in contact with others.

Asymptomatic persons should not be tested for COVID-19. Current testing for COVID-19 cannot detect prior infection. Testing a person without symptoms does not rule out the possibility that person may become ill in the future.

If your patient's COVID-19 testing returns positive, per Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, providers must report all cases of COVID-19 to the patient's county of residence. Per Health Officer order, laboratories are required to electronically report all diagnostic test results, including positive, negative, and inconclusive, to public health officials. Additional guidance regarding reporting is forthcoming.

Program Contact Information:

Communicable Disease Control Unit
Disease Prevention and Control Branch, Population Health Division
Tel: (415) 554-2830
Email: cdcontrol@sfdph.org
Fax: (415) 554-2848
<https://www.sfcddcp.org/>