

**MARCH 18, 2020**

## **HEALTH ADVISORY**

### **COVID-19 Testing Update Limited Testing Reagents and Supplies**

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has been notified of a national shortage of both testing reagents and specimen collection supplies. Although we are continuing to test at the NDDoH Division of Microbiology, we understand that we will need to prioritize testing based on specimen collection and transport supplies. During periods of either inadequate specimen collection supplies or testing reagents, testing should be prioritized for the following groups:

- Patients hospitalized with respiratory illness
- Those living or working in congregate settings
- Health care workers
- Testing for public health investigations and contact tracing

Any ambulatory patients presenting with fever and/or respiratory symptoms, and not being tested, should be instructed to stay home until

- 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 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

Patients who are ill and not able to be tested should isolate themselves from household and intimate contacts as much as possible. Other household contacts should avoid public activities for 14 days after the ill person meets the above criteria for being released from isolation.

**Health care providers should not refer patients to the NDDoH for medical consultation or screening to determine the need for testing.**

For questions related to COVID-19, health care providers can call the new NDDoH Division of Disease Control at COVID-19 hotline at 888-391-3430 Sunday through Saturday, 24/7.

Asymptomatic patients should not be tested for COVID-19. Clinicians are also encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza.

For initial diagnostic testing for COVID-19, the CDC recommends collecting and testing nasopharyngeal specimens. A nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate is also acceptable. **The oropharyngeal specimen is no longer needed.**

All patients being tested for COVID-19 will need to be isolated (at home or in a hospital) while awaiting test results. Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. [Please see CDC's Interim Guidance for Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Person's with COVID-19.](#)

If COVID-19 testing is negative, individuals should stay home until well and fever free (without fever-reducing medications) for 24 hours. Please provide your patients with the [NDDoH fact sheet for people being tested for COVID-19.](#)

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**Categories of Health Alert Network messages:**

- Health Alert** Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance
- Health Advisory** May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation
- Health Update** Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation
- HAN Info Service** Does not require immediate action; provides general public health information