MARCH 24, 2020

HEALTH ADVISORY

Updated COVID-19 Testing Guidance

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is updating information regarding which patients should be tested for COVID-19. Clinicians should continue to use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested.

Health care providers should consider testing the following patients:

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk and Transmission Risk
Fever **OR** 2 of the following signs/symptoms of respiratory illness with new or worsening onset: • Cough • shortness of breath • sore throat • chills • myalgia • fatigue	**AND**	**No source of exposure has been identified**
NDDoH recommends that asymptomatic patients NOT be tested; the State Lab will NOT run tests performed on asymptomatic patients at this time.		

If testing supplies are limited at the local level or need to be prioritized at the state level, the following patients should be prioritized for COVID-19 testing:
- Patients hospitalized with respiratory illness
- Those living in congregate settings (i.e., long term care, group homes)
- Health care workers
- Testing for public health investigations and contact tracing (symptomatic contacts to known COVID-19 cases)

Health care providers should continue to ask their patients about travel history, both internationally (including cruises) and domestic, as travel continues to be an increased risk for COVID-19 infection. **Asymptomatic patients should not be tested for COVID-19.** Providers must complete a COVID-19 Evaluation and Test Report Form **and** a Test Request Form. Both forms must be included with the specimen. If the COVID-19 Evaluation and Test Report Form is

not included with the specimen, that specimen may move to the bottom of the queue if specimens need to be prioritized.

Health care providers should not refer patients to the NDDoH for medical consultation or screening to determine the need for testing. Health care providers should not diagnose a patient with COVID-19 without testing and/or reporting to the NDDoH.

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

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. Below is information from the CDC regarding discontinuation of isolation:

- [Healthy individuals](#)
- [Immunocompromised individuals](#)
- [Health care workers](#)
- [Healthcare Settings](#)

If a patient is unable to be tested for COVID-19, then the criteria for discontinuation from isolation for patients with confirmed COVID-19 should be followed.

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.](#)

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