Alaska Public Health Alert

Procedures for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing in Alaska

March 10, 2020

Summary

The purpose of this alert is to update Alaska health care providers about new procedures and strategies for managing COVID-19 testing in Alaska given the ongoing global and national COVID-19 outbreak.

What’s New for Alaska Providers

- Providers no longer need to call the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) to approve testing.
- Provider must fill out a COVID-19 Report Form for each patient regardless of which laboratory is performing testing.
- Updated CDC infection control guidance is available here.

Testing

Patients who have a clinically compatible illness (defined as fever and cough, or shortness of breath) AND at least one of the following criteria should be considered for testing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient Criteria</th>
<th>Preferred Laboratory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had close contact to a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19</td>
<td>ASPHL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelled (not airport transit) within the past 14 days to a location that has a CDC Level 2 or 3 Travel Health Notice or to a community where community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring†</td>
<td>ASPHL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitalized</td>
<td>ASPHL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lives in a long-term care facility</td>
<td>ASPHL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care worker (negative influenza test)</td>
<td>ASPHL</td>
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Individuals not meeting any of the above criteria:

- A person with mild illness who is at increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19, for example, person older than 60 years, chronic medical conditions
- Other patients as determined by clinical discretion

*ASPHL laboratory supplies are limited, so please follow the preferred laboratory guidance closely.
†This situation is rapidly changing; please refer to CDC, WHO, and other available resources to make this determination.

Currently there is widespread circulation of influenza, cold viruses, and RSV in Alaska. Patients who are less likely to have had COVID-19 exposure for whom an alternate diagnosis has been confirmed may not need to be tested for COVID-19.

Specimen Collection Information for ASPHL

- Specimen collection details are on page 23 of the Laboratory Test Directory.
- Instructions for obtaining a nasopharyngeal swab are available on page 95 of the directory.
- Specimens are batched and run daily; current turnaround time is 1–3 days, 7 days a week (this may vary depending on specimen volume and resources).
- Certain specimens may be run on a STAT basis, in consultation with SOE.

Reporting and Questions

Health care providers may continue to contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) at 907-269-8000, or 800-478-0084 after-hours with any outstanding questions.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, please check the SOE’s COVID-19 website often for updates. Additional guidance is available on CDC’s COVID-19 website.