

Alaska Public Health Alert

Widespread Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Alaska – Reminders and Updated Release from Isolation Criteria

July 23, 2020

The considerable increase in COVID-19 cases throughout Alaska has delayed the ability for public health to connect individually with all cases and their close contacts in a timely manner. During times when case counts are high, it may take 3-4 days for public health staff to contact patients. Therefore, we request that health care providers do the following:

- When evaluating and testing symptomatic patients for possible COVID-19, please inform them to [stay at home and self-isolate](#) until they receive their test result.
- Providers ordering COVID-19 tests should ensure they have a process in place to notify patients of their test results *as promptly as possible*.
- Providers should instruct patients who are positive that they will need to remain in isolation for at least 10 full days, in accordance with the [CDC guidance for release from isolation](#). Some of the key changes to the updated CDC guidance are as follows:
 - A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to determine when to discontinue home isolation, except in certain circumstances.
 - Symptom-based criteria were modified as follows:
 - Changed from “at least 72 hours” to “at least 24 hours” have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
 - Changed from “improvement in respiratory symptoms” to “improvement in symptoms” to address expanding list of symptoms associated with COVID-19.
 - For patients with severe illness, duration of isolation for up to 20 days after symptom onset may be warranted. Consider consultation with infection control experts.
 - For persons who never develop symptoms, isolation and other precautions can be discontinued 10 days after the date of specimen collection for their first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA.
- Providers should instruct patients who test positive to inform all persons with whom they had close contact starting 2 days prior to illness onset (or 2 days prior to the date of specimen collection if they are asymptomatic) up until the time when they went into isolation.
 - Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of the person for at least 15 minutes.
 - In most instances, this would mean that everyone in the patient’s household will need to be quarantined for 14 days beyond the time that the index patient is no longer infectious.