

# HEALTH ADVISORY



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH**

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum  
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

**To: Physicians and other health care providers**

**Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider  
in your organization.**

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV  
health officers:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH**

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182  
Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850  
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599  
Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

**Steven Krager, MD, MPH**

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182  
Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850  
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599  
Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

### **Alert categories:**

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate  
action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or  
situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or  
situation; no immediate action necessary.

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### *Summary*

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to closely monitor and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Community spread of SARS-CoV-2 appears to be occurring in Washington, although no cases have been identified in Southwest Washington at this time.

### *Updated Criteria for SARS-CoV-2 testing through Washington State Public Health Lab*

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Due to high volume of requests, SARS-CoV-2 testing through the Washington State Public Health Lab will be reserved for patients who meet the current CDC person under investigation (PUI) criteria:

#### **COVID-19 should be suspected in patients who present with:**

- Fever **OR** signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) **AND** any person, including health care personnel, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset.
- Fever **AND** signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization **AND** a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset.
- Fever with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g. pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome) requiring hospitalization and without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g. influenza) **AND** no identified source of exposure.

For additional details on the CDC PUI criteria refer to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html> These criteria are **subject to change** as additional information becomes available.

#### **To request permission to test for SARS-Cov-2 through the WA Public Health Lab:**

- When assessing patients for COVID-19, please use the “Healthcare Provider Evaluation Tool” available on the Department of Health’s website for Healthcare providers: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HealthcareProviders>.
- Health care providers should call their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) to determine whether a patient meets the PUI criteria and warrants testing through the Washington State Public Health Lab.
- If SARS-CoV-2 testing is approved by the LHJ, the LHJ will provide the ordering provider with the 2019-nCoV ID for that patient. The ordering provider will need to include this 2019-nCoV ID on the Washington State Public Health Lab 2019 nCoV Sample Submission Form.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>

### **Specimen collection guidance:**

- Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset.
- Refer to the Washington State Public Health Lab Microbiology Laboratory Test Menu page for detailed guidance on specimen collection and handling.  
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>

### ***Testing options for individuals that DO NOT meet PUI criteria***

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For patients that do not meet the PUI criteria and testing through the Washington State Public Health Lab, providers can now directly order SARS-CoV-2 testing through the University of Washington's Virology Lab.

- Collect a Nasopharyngeal (NP) or Nasal swab in universal transport medium (UTM) or viral transport medium (VTM) and refrigerate, double bag specimens.
- Fill out a [virology requisition](#) and write in NCVQLT.
- Further instructions for shipping can be found here:  
<https://testguide.labmed.uw.edu/public/view/NCVQLT> or call (206) 520-4600 or 1 (800) 713-5198.

Providers will need to confirm with their lab services what their internal processes are for ordering this test through University of Washington's Virology Lab.

### ***Infection control***

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Clinicians should immediately implement recommended infection prevention and control practices (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>) if a patient is suspected of having COVID-19.

### ***Background***

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The outbreak that began in Wuhan, China has now spread throughout China and to 78 other countries and territories, including the United States.

The risk of exposure is increasing for people who live in communities in Washington state with reported spread of COVID-19, though risk is still relatively low. As of 3/3/2020 there have been 18 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington State, along with 6 deaths.

Additional information is available on the CDC's COVID-19 website,  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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**Thank you for your partnership.**

<b>Local health jurisdiction</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax</b>
Clark County Public Health	564.397.8182	564.397.8080
Cowlitz County Health Department	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143

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