

# 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), the Washington Department of Health and local public health departments continue to closely monitor and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Clark County identified its first case of COVID-19 Friday, March 6 in a male in his 70s who is currently hospitalized. With exceptions as described below, Public Health requests that nearly all testing for COVID-19 go through University of Washington (UW) or other available commercial laboratory options.

## *Updated Guidance for COVID-19 Testing*

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### **1. Testing at UW or Commercial Laboratories**

In general, health care providers should send specimens for COVID-19 testing to UW or other commercial laboratories offering COVID-19 testing. There are currently **no restrictions** on who can be tested for COVID-19 through commercial testing or UW. Health care providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, shortness of breath) or otherwise based on their clinical judgment.

The following patients with COVID-19 symptoms are considered **highest priority** for testing:

- Health care workers
- Patients involved in an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., health care, school, corrections, shelters)
- Patients with severe lower respiratory illness (hospitalized or fatal)
- Patients with worsening symptoms
- Patients older than 60 years
- Patients with underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant women
- Patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)

Though testing may not change clinical management, knowing patients' COVID-19 status will help Public Health characterize the spectrum of illness, track the distribution of COVID-19 and enhance our response to the outbreak.

Please see each laboratory's test menu for specimen collection instructions, submission forms, and shipping requirements. Please include the patient's name, date of birth, address and phone number.

The Washington State Insurance Commissioner has ordered all Washington health insurers to waive deductibles and copays for COVID-19 testing. Providers will need to confirm with their lab services what their internal processes are for ordering this test through UW or other commercial labs.

- [Information on how to order through UW can be found here.](#)

If COVID-19 is being considered, whether testing or not, please provide patients with the following guidance documents so that they know how to best prevent the spread of infection to other people, and to minimize phone calls to your office and to public health.

- [Patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#)
- [Patients who were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case](#)
- [Unexposed patients with COVID-19 symptoms](#)

## 2. Testing at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories

Testing at the state public health lab is currently restricted to the following patients:

- Health care workers
- Patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Patients involved in an illness cluster in a facility or group (e.g., health care, school, corrections, business)
- Patients with no health insurance

*To request permission to test for COVID-19 through the WA Public Health Lab:*

Health care providers should call their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) to determine whether a patient meets these restrictions and warrants testing through the Washington State Public Health Lab. See contact numbers below.

If COVID-19 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:*

- 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>

### ***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.

### [Infection Prevention in Outpatient Settings](#)

### ***Background***

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The outbreak that began in Wuhan, China has now spread to 100 other countries and territories, and 35 states within the United States.

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The risk of exposure is increasing for people who live in communities in Washington state with reported spread of COVID-19. As of 3/9/2020 there have been 162 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington state, including 22 deaths.

For up to date information about the Washington COVID-19 outbreak, visit: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus> .

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

**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