



Update and Interim Guidance on New CDC Testing Criteria for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Date: March 4, 2020

Public Health Message Type: Alert Advisory Update Information

Intended Audience: All public health partners Healthcare providers Infection preventionists
 Local health departments Schools/childcare centers ACOs
 Animal health professionals Other:

Key Points or Updates:

- (1) The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak continues to expand worldwide, with community transmission on several continents and is a rapidly evolving situation.
- (2) As of now, testing for the virus that causes COVID-19 in New Jersey is only available through the NJ State Public Health Laboratory. This may change in the new future.
- (3) At this time, testing for the virus that causes COVID-19 will only be approved for individuals who meet criteria set the [NJDOH Surveillance and Testing Criteria](#).

Action Items:

- (1) Healthcare providers wanting to request COVID-19 testing should be familiar the NJDOH Surveillance and Testing Criteria located at:
https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/Surveillance_Criteria_and_Testing_for_2019_nCoV.pdf
- (2) As of March 4, 2020, CDC recommended that a broader testing strategy be employed. This guidance also indicates that clinical and epidemiologic factors should be used in determining if testing is appropriate. NJDOH guidance accounts for both clinical and epidemiologic risk factors and current criteria will be used approved testing conducting at the state public health laboratory.
- (3) One of the testing criteria includes evaluating patients for testing with severe acute lower respiratory disease who do not have an identified epidemiologic risk factor for COVID-19. For individuals fitting this criterion, clinicians should perform routine evaluation, including testing for common causes of community-acquired pneumonia *before* notifying the NJDOH.
- (4) If COVID-19 is on the differential diagnosis list, implement appropriate infection control precautions before discussing case with a NJDOH clinician.
- (5) For severe lower respiratory illness in hospitalized patients with no identified epidemiological risk, clinical features that may increase suspicion of COVID-19 include:
 - a. Acute respiratory distress syndrome
 - b. Infiltrative process on chest x-ray (e.g., bilateral infiltrates consistent with viral pneumonitis)
 - c. Bilateral ground-glass opacities on chest computerized tomography

- d. Unexplained lymphopenia or thrombocytopenia
- (6) If the clinical and radiologic presentation are equivocal, the following epidemiologic exposures within the 14 days preceding symptom onset should increase suspicion for COVID-19:
- a. Close contact with an ill traveler who was in an affected country (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>)
 - b. A healthcare provider who may have had exposure to an unrecognized case of COVID-19
- (7) The NJDOH is asking that all healthcare providers report all patients with suspected COVID-19 and especially those in whom testing, in their clinical judgement, is likely to yield a COVID-19 diagnosis. Patients should be reported to the local health department in which the patient resides. If the patient's residence is unknown, report to your own local health department. A list of local health departments can be found at: <http://www.localhealth.nj.gov/>

Contact Information:

- The Communicable Disease Service at (609) 826-5964 during business hours

Resources:

COVID-19 resources are available at the following websites:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

NJDOH: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>