

EPI Update for Friday, March 6, 2020
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

COVID-19 Updated Testing & Reporting Guidance

The CDC has provided another update to their testing guidance, and several national reference laboratories now (or in the near future) have the capability to test for COVID-19. In light of the expanded testing availability at private laboratories, IDPH is now requiring all healthcare providers to call IDPH immediately (at 800-362-2736 during business hours and 515-323-4360 after hours) to report patients who test positive for COVID-19 infection in order to facilitate public health investigation and disease control activities. Please be advised that if COVID-19 becomes established in Iowa communities, requirements for the method of reporting positive results may be modified. Please also note testing turnaround times for other laboratories may vary and should be assessed with those facilities.

Until testing capabilities become widely available through national reference laboratories, the primary COVID-19 testing capacity remains at the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) and has approximately a 24 hour turnaround time. However, since testing supplies available to public health laboratories currently remain limited, IDPH and SHL will continue to work with healthcare providers to evaluate patients in accordance with the following criteria.

Symptoms	Other Testing	Exposure History
Fever OR Respiratory Symptoms	Patient tests negative for influenza	Close contact with a person confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to illness onset
Fever AND Respiratory Symptoms	Patient tests negative for influenza	History of travel to a COVID-19 AFFECTED AREA* in the 14 days prior to illness onset
Acute onset of severe respiratory illness, such as Pneumonia or Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome	Patient tests negative for influenza	No exposure history or travel to a COVID-19 AFFECTED AREA*

*AFFECTED AREAS are defined as areas with community spread. Currently this includes countries that currently have Level 2 or Level 3 Travel Health Notices in place for COVID-19. For the most up to date list of Travel Health Notices visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

IDPH encourages healthcare providers to continue to contact IDPH to at 800-362-2736 during business hours or 515-323-4360 to discuss whether testing can be completed at the State Hygienic Laboratory to meet public health needs. Thank you all for your continued efforts to protect the health of Iowans.