For any questions, call the Humboldt County Public Health Communicable Disease Program at 707-268-2182

HEALTH ADVISORY
March 10, 2020

COVID-19 Testing Guidance
The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory has received limited COVID-19 testing supplies and is now accepting specimens for local testing. In addition, commercial labs (Quest and LabCorp) are accepting specimens as well and without the need for state or CDC approval. Turnaround time for the Public health Lab is expected to be 24-48 hours.

Please note, Humboldt County Public Health is not directly collecting specimens from symptomatic patients. Please do not ask patients to contact public health to ask whether they need testing. Decisions about testing should be made by the healthcare provider, in consultation with the Health Officer, as needed.

In light of the new increased access to lab testing for COVID-19 infection, it is important that your internal protocols follow guidance provide by CDC. The guidance changes frequently so it is important to check the site frequently at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html.

Who should be tested?
Current guidance asks that patients with mild symptoms on screening should stay at home until well. The Health Department is messaging this to the public.

Per the CDC (3/8/20), clinicians should use their judgement to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness such as cough or difficulty breathing. Priorities for testing may include:

- Hospitalized patients who have signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 in order to inform decisions related to infection control
- Other symptomatic individuals such as older adult >65 years of age and individuals with chronic medical conditions and/or an immunocompromised state that may put them at increased risk for poor outcomes (diabetes, heart disease, receiving immunosuppressive drugs, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease.
- Any persons including healthcare workers who within the previous 14 days of symptom onset had close contact with a suspect or laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 patient or who have a history of travel from an affected geographic areas (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) within 14 days of symptoms onset.

*If local testing capacity is being strained*, priority will be given to healthcare workers, hospitalized patients, travelers from high transmission areas and those at higher risk of serious disease. Individuals who do not fall into one of these groups, would be most appropriate for commercial lab testing. Symptoms of concern are fever and cough or shortness of breath.

Continued on next page...
Epidemiologic factors such as presence or absence of known infections in the community and known community transmission. Older patients and patients with underlying medical conditions should contact their HCP early, even when symptoms are mild in the face of community transmission. As of today, there is no documented community infection in Humboldt County.

If you wish to utilize Public Health COVID-19 testing:

This requires contacting Public Health to approve of the testing and obtain a PUI number. Your facility’s lab should contact the Public Health Lab when the specimen has been collected. Contact our Communicable Disease (CD) department during business hours at (707) 268-2182 (8 am - 5pm) if you wish to request public health testing. After hours, you may reach the Health Officer through Sheriff’s Dispatch.

We are continuing to emphasize the need for testing to rule-out common pathogens such as influenza, prior to requesting COVID-19 testing. PH will not be pursuing COVID-19 testing if another likely organism/explanation has been identified.

We require that any clinician who orders the COVID-19 test from a commercial source such as Quest or LabCorp inform the Humboldt County Communicable Diseases Department about the patient so we can have situational awareness using a CMR form faxed to (707) 445-7346. For any questions about this process, please call our CD department at (707) 268-2182 during business hours.

Any person tested for COVID-19, whether by a commercial or public health lab, must be on home or hospital isolation until the test results are available. If the test result is positive, the person becomes a COVID-19 CASE and must be immediately reported to the Public Health Officer by phone and maintained in ISOLATION. The close personal contacts of this individual should practice social distancing until the test results are back, and if they develop symptoms, they should also be tested. Social distancing includes staying home from work or school; wearing a surgical mask when around other people; and staying away from any congregate setting such as markets.

What specimens should be collected?

- Collect one nasopharyngeal swab (NP) AND one throat swab/oropharyngeal swab (OP) and combine into a single vial of viral transport media at the time of collection.
- NO sputum sample is requested
- We will automatically test all specimens for influenza as well. We no longer need an additional NP swab. We do need a separate influenza PCR requisition completed.
- Please completely and legibly fill out a HCPHL test requisition
- Store and ship all specimens at refrigerator temperature (4°C)
- Freeze if transport to HCPHL is greater than 3 days
- For pick-up or additional collection supplies, call 707-499-4513
- Please call the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory if you have any questions 707-268-2179

Please see the attached lab HCPHL specimen guidance. Thank you for all of your efforts to address this Outbreak.
Coronavirus (COVID-19) PCR Testing

- The CDC 2019-Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Real-Time PCR assay is intended for the presumptive qualitative detection of nucleic acid from the 2019-nCoV in upper and lower respiratory specimens.

***If COVID-19 is suspected, please contact the Public Health Communicable Disease Nurse for consultation and patient management while with patient (707) 268-2182 or (707) 445-6200. To reach the Health Officer after hours, Contact Sherriff’s Office Dispatcher at (707) 445-7251 and request to speak to the Health Officer.

- Please use the Viral/Influenza collection kits provided by the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (HCPHL)
  - Kits contains: 2 flocked synthetic swabs (use size that is appropriate for collection) and viral transport media (VTM)
- Please fill out each HCPHL requisition completely and legibly and label all specimens
  - Improper specimen labeling and incomplete/incorrect requisitions will delay testing and results
- Courier pick-up is provided by HCPHL
  - For pick-up or additional supplies, call 707-499-4513

Specimen Collection & Transport:
- Specimens should be collected as soon as possible, regardless of time of symptom onset
- Collect one nasopharyngeal swab (NP) AND one throat swab/oropharyngeal swab (OP) and combine into a single vial of viral transport media at the time of collection
- This same specimen can be used for influenza PCR, but an additional requisition is needed.
- It must be a Dacron or nylon flocked swab (calcium alginate or cotton swabs are inhibitory to PCR)
- Please see the collection guidelines below.
  - After collection, place each swab (NP and OP) into the provided VTM
  - Keep refrigerated (4°C)
  - All specimens should be transported immediately to the HCPHL
  - Freeze specimen if hold time exceeds 72 hours

Collection Guidelines:
- Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate, leave the swab in place for 5 seconds to absorb secretions
- Oropharyngeal swab (e.g., throat swab): Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue and teeth
- We are no longer requesting sputum for testing. Sputum specimens will be rejected.

***Please call the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory if you have any questions. 707-268-2179