



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

HEALTH ADVISORY

July 21, 2020

COVID-19 Public Health Laboratory Testing

SITUATION As you may be aware, the massive increase in testing in recent weeks across the state and country has placed an enormous strain on supplies of test kits and reagents, and has increased turnaround time substantially at commercial labs. Because of this, there has been an increasing demand for testing through the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (HCPHL) and we are working to increase our capacity through additional equipment. The Emergency Operations Center is also working on establishing an Optum-alternate that would improve turnaround time and access for local residents. Testing prioritization has been adapted to reflect local capacity and the broader access issues.

The HCPHL continues to accept specimens for testing. Please note that testing capacity is still limited and currently about 75 samples per day. Although capacity is limited, we want to help you in your efforts to test patients who, in your clinical judgment, are possibly positive for COVID-19.

IMPORTANT UPDATE In order to manage the large volume of testing submissions, and to prioritize testing we are asking that providers assign samples a priority level based on the attached *Humboldt County COVID-19 Testing Prioritization Chart*. The HCPHL will focus on Priority levels 1 and 2 to ensure fastest turn-around time for these risk groups locally. As capacity allows and with *pre-authorization* we will also accept priority 3. **Please record the priority level on the requisition.** Please note, if samples are not indicated with a priority level, they will automatically be assigned priority level 4 and tested accordingly.

Based on information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Humboldt County Public Health has approved symptom-based clearance for all patients. To help us preserve resources, we ask that you not submit samples for COVID clearance. For the same reason, we request that you avoid duplicate testing for COVID (sending simultaneously collected samples from a single patient to multiple laboratories) and repeat testing (requesting multiple tests for a single patient).

We want to emphasize that Public Health IS NOT routinely collecting test samples from patients on site. Please DO NOT send patients to Public Health to be tested. We recognize the advantages of being able to test outside of the clinical setting and are actively working with partners to expand collection capacity. We will keep you informed.

We are also beginning to participate in a COVID-19 surveillance project in partnership with CDPH. For those specimens sent to the HCPHL for testing, please ask your patient if they would be interested in participating in the project to help us better understand COVID-19 transmission. If willing, we ask that you call 707-268-2180 with patient name and phone number to allow us to follow-up. This would consist of a 10-15 minute phone call to collect information.





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Specimen Collection

• Acceptable Sample Types:

- NOT Leaking- double check cap is secure before placing into sealed specimen bag.
 - A single nasopharyngeal (NP) swab collected by a healthcare provider in standard viral media is the preferred specimen; or
 - An anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collected by healthcare provider or by supervised onsite self-collection (using a flocked or foam swab); Swab both nares with a foam nasal swab, then place into transport media; or
 - A nasal mid-turbinate swab collected by healthcare provider or by supervised onsite self-collection (using a flocked tapered swab), then placed into transport media.
 - Please **DO NOT** send sputum sample on any COVID patient.
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- All **specimens** *MUST* be labeled with the following:
 - Patient name
 - Patient DOB
 - Date and time of collection
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- Keep sample refrigerated (4°). All samples should be transported to the HCPHL as soon as possible. Freeze sample if hold time exceeds 72 hrs.
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- Viral test collection kits are provided to your labs. As we receive specimens, we replace the kits for your lab. However, in the absence of a pre-packaged kit, all you need is your NP or nasal swab and a viral media tube. Do not use the viral kits provided by HCPHL to submit your specimens to commercial laboratories.
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- A lab requisition must be completed and accompany the swab. This requisition can come from an Electronic Health System, or it can be the PHB paper requisition form.
 - Please provide a demographic sheet with the requisition when available
 - Please keep the sample separated from the requisition for safety
 - Please fill-out all demographics information including name, DOB, address and phone number. For those willing to participate in the COVID-19 Surveillance Project, please check the “Surveillance Project” box, double-check accuracy of phone number for follow-up purposes, and call 707-268-2180 to provide a patient name and number.
 - **Incomplete requisition will result in delayed testing**
 - **Required information:**
 - **Ordering physician**
 - **Submitting agency**
 - **Name of patient**
 - **Patient address and phone number**
 - **DOB**
 - **Date and time of collection**
 - **Source of collection**
 - **Condition of specimen**
 - **Priority level**





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- Your collection supplies will be replaced as they are used. However, if your site runs low, please contact the HCPHL directly to request additional collection supplies at (707) 268-2179. Again, only as many as are used will be given due to HCPHL's limited supply.
- Please contact the lab courier phone at 707-499-4513 to schedule a routine courier pick-up – please leave a voicemail with details of pick-up. HCPHL has a dedicated COVID courier who picks up multiple times a day – just call the courier phone number and leave a message.

Current Testing Capacity

- 75 tests / day – Testing Monday - Saturday – Turn-around time is 24-72 hours.
- HCPHL will attempt to increase to 100/day the week of August 3, 2020.

Please note, we have been receiving some specimens with incomplete and/or missing forms, as well as encountering requisitions packaged in with the specimens. Please separate the specimen from the requisition for staff safety. Missing information or incomplete submission will delay testing results.

The HCPHL would like to thank all of our partners for their continued cooperation and communication. Having requisitions filled out appropriately and samples collected and labeled correctly allows our staff to focus on testing rather than correcting problems. Thank you for your hard work and cooperation during this pandemic response.



Humboldt County COVID-19 Testing Prioritization Chart

PRIORITY 1: Ensures continuity of healthcare system operations and protects from introduction of COVID-19 into high risk situations. Helps to facilitate PPE preservation, infection control measures, and protect healthcare workforce. Appropriate identification of individuals where disease control decisions (i.e. isolation and quarantine) are paramount for containment.

Interfacility Transfers: Those awaiting “clearance” testing for transfer to another facility e.g. SemperVirens, SNFs (regardless of symptoms)

Congregate Settings: Symptomatic individuals residing or working in congregate living facilities such as SNFs, incarceration, shelters, long-term care facilities

Healthcare Workers: Regardless of exposure, symptomatic healthcare workers (including EMS)

Hospitalized: Patients who are hospitalized with symptoms consistent with COVID

Contacts: Symptomatic close contacts to a confirmed case. Symptomatic household contacts to confirmed cases can be run on Abbott ID Now. If negative, repeat with rtPCR test. Generally, asymptomatic close contacts are not tested although *exceptions* may be considered.

PRIORITY 2: Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection and those in higher risk settings are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged. Help to ensure the essential services workforce.

First Responders: Symptomatic first responders including law enforcement and fire

Critical Infrastructure: Symptomatic individuals whose occupation is part of critical infrastructure

High Risk: Symptomatic individuals who have risk factors, such as age over 65 or comorbidities, which put them at heightened risk for severe illness

Symptomatic individuals Not Listed Above: Individuals for whom there is clinical suspicion of COVID-19 will be tested as long as capacity allows.

PRIORITY 3:

Congregate setting surveillance: Asymptomatic screening of staff working in congregate settings with medically fragile, often elderly patients. This includes staff from SNFs, Hospice, and PACE. May also consider RCFEs.

PRIORITY 4: Individuals not falling into the categories above whose symptoms may be consistent with COVID.

- * This priority level should be tested through a commercial laboratory to ensure testing through public health is available for priority levels 1-3
- * If you are not sure about how your patient should be prioritized, please call the PH Communicable Disease line at 268-2182. After hours, please contact Sheriff Dispatch for the Health Officer.

COVID-19 Workflow for Testing Through the Humboldt County Public Health Lab

1. Test individuals who fall into priority levels 1-2 on the Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart. Priority 3 specimens will be accepted as long as capacity allows and in consultation with Public Health. For all levels, ask if the patient is interested in participating in a 10-15 minute phone interview to help us better understand virus transmission locally and across the state. If willing, mark the “Surveillance Project” box and ensure that a single best phone number is on the order requisition. Please call 707-268-2180 to provide patient name and phone number to our HSU project coordinator.
2. Collect the sample
 - a. Use a single NP swab or other fully synthetic swab.
 - b. An anterior nares swab may be used if an NP swab cannot be done. A provider-observed self-collection may be considered. Although some sensitivity is sacrificed (increased possibility of false negative), this collection method should be strongly considered to help alleviate poor surveillance testing compliance due to NP swab discomfort.
3. Complete the Humboldt County laboratory requisition form.
 - a. The requisition form must include the priority level (1-3 using the prioritization chart) on the requisition.
 - b. Please ensure the requisition is complete and include a demographics sheet. Samples without completed requisitions will be frozen for testing when the completed requisition is submitted.
4. Contact the Humboldt County public health lab's courier line at 707-499-4513 and leave a message requesting pickup.
 - a. The courier picks up samples multiple times each day Monday through Saturday.
5. Results are available within 48-72 hours of receipt of the sample.
 - a. All results will be sent electronically or faxed to the established single point of contact for your facility.
 - b. Positive results will be called to the established single point of contact for your facility.

*Asymptomatic individuals not falling into categories above should pursue testing at OptumServe. This includes individuals being tested for any “clearance” purposes unless performed explicitly at the direction of Public Health. Inclusive of this are return-to-work policies adopted by employers, or travel-related requests. A notable exception is for pre-op clearance testing. Optum is unlikely to return a timely enough result for pre-op clearance. Other routes to COVID-19 testing are available through community providers.

<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>

888-634-1123