

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3/10/2020

TO: Grant County healthcare providers, infection control staff, supervisory nursing staff, clinic management, urgent cares, and school nurses.

Grant County Emergency Management

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

Maria Vargas, Community Public Health Manager
509-766-7960 ext. 19 or mvargas@granthealth.org

Update on COVID-19 Testing; New guidance on Quarantine of Returning Travelers

COVID-19 Testing Information

There are currently no restrictions on COVID-19 testing as commercial laboratories options are becoming more widely available. Healthcare providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) using clinical judgment. If an alternative diagnosis is found (i.e. a positive influenza A test), COVID-19 testing would only seem appropriate in a high probability exposure scenario (travel to a high risk country, exposure to a COVID-19 case, etc.).

Though testing may not change clinical management, at this time knowing patients' COVID-19 status will help public health track COVID-19 and better respond to this stage of the epidemic.

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

- 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
- Healthcare workers
- Patients in other public safety occupations (e.g., law enforcement, fire fighter, EMS)
- Patients involved in an illness cluster in a facility or institution (e.g., healthcare, school, corrections, shelters)

In general, we do not recommend testing asymptomatic persons. However, you can consider testing asymptomatic persons if they have been in close contact with a confirmed case. A negative test result does not rule out an infection.

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](#)

Testing at Commercial Laboratories

In general, healthcare providers should send specimens for COVID-19 testing to commercial laboratories.

Please see each laboratory's test menu for specimen collection instructions, submission forms, and shipping requirements. Please be sure to 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.

Testing at the Public Health Laboratories (PHL)

Specimens from the following patients can be sent to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories:

- Healthcare 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., healthcare, school, corrections, business)
- Patients with no health insurance

If seeking testing at the Public Health Laboratories, call GCHD at (509) 766-7960 ext. 19 or (509) 398-2083 (after hours) with the above information to discuss the case. PHL will fax its results to the submitter and GCHD.

For PHL testing, collect two specimens and send with the nCoV form (see link below), including submitter name, address, phone number and fax number. If the patient can produce sputum, collect nasopharyngeal (NP) and sputum specimens. If the patient cannot produce sputum, collect NP and oropharyngeal (OP) swabs. When collecting NP and OP specimens, use a synthetic swab and place the specimen in 2-3 ml viral transport media, put two identifiers (e.g., name, birthdate) on tubes and form, and store at 2°-8°C.

Complete PHL COVID-19 lab submission instructions:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>

Quarantine of Returning Travelers

Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, advises per CDC guidance, that travelers recently returning from countries with “Level 3” Travel Notices—China, South Korea, Italy and Iran—conduct self-quarantines for 14 days from the time they left the area. The quarantine should consist of the following:

1. Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
2. Stay home and avoid contact with others. **Do not go to work*** or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
3. Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
4. Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
5. Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters)

***Healthcare workers should contact their employee health staff. Consider calling GCHD for consult.**

Relevant CDC link is here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assessment-hcp.html>