

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3/17/2020

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

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COVID-19 Provider Update**Reminder about distancing during patient care; HCW symptom checks; testing update**

Cases of COVID-19 are continuing to increase statewide and in Grant County. As of this date, seven (7) cases have been confirmed in our county with several linked, probable cases under investigation. Please continue working on preparing your staff and facilities for additional COVID-19 patient volume, including coordinating with your healthcare partners in our county and beyond. Additional reminders and updates are included below.

Patient Care Distancing and Masking Reminder

To protect healthcare workers (HCW) from exposure to symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 patients, it is again recommended to conduct all patient encounters outside of 6 feet distance. In addition, HCWs may elect to use (and appropriately reuse) N95 mask at all times or institute other distancing interventions.

At the same time, surgical mask use should be reserved to symptomatic patients or to encounters that need to occur with six feet for a prolonged period of time (PT, OT, etc.). The primary person-to-person mode of transmission of COVID-19 is via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or even talks. Surgical masks offer protection against larger respiratory droplets and are acceptable during most patient care interactions. N-95 respirators should be worn at all times when attending to patients with respiratory symptoms, and a face shield, gown and gloves should be used during aerosolizing procedures (i.e. specimen collection, nebulizer use, suctioning of airways, etc.).

HCW Symptom Checks

Because of the increasing risk of HCWs to COVID-19, it is recommended that healthcare facilities continue instituting regular twice daily symptom checks (i.e. unit logs at the highest risk locations, like ER, ICU, respiratory units, long-term care facilities) for all staff having contact with patients.

We realize that shortages of certain equipment, including thermometers or thermometer sheaths may lead to a differing staff monitoring practices, so scope of this practice will differ from facility to facility. Identification and exclusion of potentially ill HCWs is imperative for COVID-19 infection control within a facility and to ensure

essential staff remain available to provide care. Any HCW reporting symptoms should be immediately excluded, isolated and COVID-19 testing conducted as appropriate. Please note that a negative test of ASYMPTOMATIC HCWs does not rule out a possibility of incubating COVID-19 infection.

Testing Update

There are currently no restrictions on who can be tested for COVID-19, while some risk stratification, prioritization and resource preservation is appropriate. Resources permitting, healthcare providers may test any patient with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath). In general, asymptomatic patients (usually contacts of COVID-19) should not be tested (a negative test result for an asymptomatic individual does not rule out an infection or incubation). There is no update on the looming shortage of viral transport media.

The most recent DOH document on testing decision-making can be found here: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Interim-2019NovelCoronavirusQuicksheetProviders.pdf>

At this stage of our community spread, knowing patients' COVID-19 status helps us track COVID-19 and better respond to the outbreaks or clusters, particularly in high risk and high community impact situations. **Please continue to report all persons being tested for COVID-19 to GCHD. Additional details about the patient and/or reason for testing should be included, if possible, to help us identify and prioritize individuals for investigation.**

If you are testing a patient for COVID-19, that patient is considered a person under investigation (PUI) and should be sent home on isolation with guidance from this link: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDcasepositive.pdf>
