



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

March 26, 2020

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to provide important updates regarding testing for COVID-19.

Earlier this week, Secretary Neall issued a [Directive and Order Regarding Various Healthcare Matters](#) stating that health care providers shall prioritize COVID-19 test orders to the following groups:

- A. Hospitalized patients, who should be tested by the most expeditious means available (either a hospital lab, private lab, or the State Laboratory);
- B. Symptomatic Emergency Medical Service Personnel, healthcare workers, and law enforcement personnel;
- C. Symptomatic patients in nursing homes, long-term care facilities, or in congregate living facilities housing individuals who are medically fragile; OR
- D. Symptomatic high-risk unstable patients whose care would be altered by a diagnosis of COVID-19.

The Maryland Department of Health is continuing to conduct COVID-19 testing and will accept specimens for patients in these prioritized groups (A-D). MDH cannot accept lower priority specimens for testing at this time.

- Health department approval is no longer required for COVID-19 testing performed at MDH. Clinicians do not need to notify the local or state health department of the decision to test or the decision to submit the specimen to MDH for testing.
- Clinicians may only submit specimens to MDH for patients in these prioritized groups. However, clinicians are NOT required to use MDH for COVID-19 testing of these groups.
- Clinicians should use their own swabs and viral transport media for specimens submitted to MDH for testing.
- An MDH Laboratories Administration test order form must be completed and accompany the specimen, **AND must indicate the specimen's priority group (A, B, C or D).**
- Continue to follow MDH Laboratory Administration guidelines related to specimen collection, shipping guidance, and the required test request form:
<https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/Pages/Novel-Coronavirus.aspx>

For related questions, please contact your local health department.

- **Clinicians should continue to also use commercial and hospital laboratories for COVID-19 testing, as determined by clinical judgment.**
- Testing of asymptomatic people is not advised.
- Mildly ill patients should be encouraged to stay home if they can safely care for themselves at home.
- Patients who have clinical symptoms consistent with COVID-19, but who are not tested for COVID-19, should be advised to self-isolate at home until:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and,**
 - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

We would also like to call your attention to additional CDC guidance that has been released in recent days, including the following:

- [Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 \(Interim Guidance\)](#)
- [Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Disposition of Patients with COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings \(Interim Guidance\)](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monique Duwell', written in a cursive style.

Monique Duwell, MD, MPH
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Maryland Department of Health