



**LAC DPH Health Advisory:  
COVID-19 Testing, Isolation and Quarantine,  
and Health Care Worker Monitoring  
Recommendations**



March 19, 2020

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*This message is intended for all healthcare providers practicing in Los Angeles County.  
Please distribute as appropriate.*

### **Key Messages**

- The number of COVID-19 cases in Los Angeles County continues to rise, including many new cases in LA County residents without travel and exposure risk factors. This suggests increasing rates of community transmission of COVID-19.
- In the setting of increasing community transmission, the LA County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) is shifting from a strategy of case containment to slowing disease transmission and averting excess morbidity and mortality. It is recommended that providers test persons with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 only when a diagnostic result will change clinical management or inform public health response.
- With the increasing availability of COVID-19 diagnostic testing capability through commercial clinical laboratories, testing through the LAC DPH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) will be prioritized for the detection and prevention of outbreaks in acute- and subacute-care health facilities and non-healthcare congregate living settings.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued guidance on discontinuing home isolation for persons with COVID-19 infection based on a combination of time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery criteria.
- LAC DPH has released [Guidance for Monitoring Health Care Personnel](#) based on recently revised CDC guidance. All healthcare personnel should self-monitor with the oversight of healthcare facilities.
- With increasing case counts of COVID-19, healthcare facilities should implement their surge plans. See Health Officer [letter](#) on COVID-19 Surge Planning.

### **Situation**

There has now been a total of 190 confirmed COVID-19 cases in LA County, including cases reported by Long Beach and Pasadena Health Departments. A growing number of these cases are among persons who did not report any travel outside of LA County or close contact with a person with confirmed infection. Based on this, it appears that there is increasing community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In this setting, DPH is shifting to a mitigation strategy aimed at slowing disease transmission and averting excess morbidity and mortality. For additional testing and case data see [COVID-19 Surveillance Data for Los Angeles County](#).

This advisory will provide recommendations on testing, including when to use the PHL, isolation and quarantine, and discontinuation of isolation including return to work for healthcare workers. Healthcare providers are encouraged to visit the DPH Coronavirus 2019: Information for Healthcare Providers' [webpage](#) for the current situation and most up-to-date guidance and resources.

## Recommendations

### Testing

- COVID-19 testing at PHL is preferred for persons meeting the following criteria because a timely result can inform an urgent public health response:

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk Factors
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath)	and	Any healthcare worker (defined as a person providing direct clinical care to patients) who worked while symptomatic in an acute or long-term care facility <sup>1</sup> -or- A resident of a long-term care facility -or- Paramedic personnel and Emergency Medicine Technicians (EMTs)
Part of a cluster of 2 or more cases of a presumed infectious acute respiratory illness within a 72-hour period	and	Any congregate living setting (e.g. senior assisted-living facility, homeless shelters)

<sup>1</sup> Note that all healthcare workers are advised to self-monitor for symptoms and not report to work if they are experiencing symptoms.

- Unless confirming a diagnosis of COVID-19 will impact patient management, DPH strongly recommends against COVID-19 diagnostic testing for persons with mild febrile respiratory illness who can be safely managed at home. This will minimize possible exposures to healthcare workers, patients, and the public and will reduce the demand for personal protective equipment.
- It is recommended that providers test only persons with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 where a diagnostic result will change clinical management or inform public health response.
- Testing of asymptomatic persons is not recommended because the available tests have not been approved and validated for testing of those without symptoms. If patients know they have been exposed, they should be counseled to self-quarantine.

### *Isolation and Quarantine*

- Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should be provided with [home isolation](#) instructions.
- Patients who are waiting for COVID-19 test results should be presumed infectious and instructed to follow [home isolation](#) instructions.
- Persons with mild febrile respiratory illness in whom diagnostic testing will not change management should be presumed to have COVID-19. They should be instructed to isolate themselves and follow [home care](#) instructions.
- Close contacts (household members, intimate partners, and caregivers) to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be provided with [home quarantine](#) instructions.

### *Discontinuation of Home Isolation*

- According to [CDC guidance](#), symptomatic persons with COVID-19 who were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation when both of the following time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery conditions are met:
  - 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*.

### *Discontinuation of Home Isolation and Return to Work for Health Care Workers*

- Healthcare workers with COVID-19 can return to work after they meet the above time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery conditions.
- After returning to work they should:
  - Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles);
  - Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen;
  - Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer; and
  - Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset.

See CDC [Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 \(Interim Guidance\)](#) and LAC DPH [Guidance for Monitoring Health Care Personnel](#) for more information.

- Please note that COVID-19 test results can be falsely negative, especially early in the course of illness and with less severe illness. Therefore, any patient that is being tested for COVID-19 should maintain isolation precautions regardless of

the test result until the above time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery conditions are met.

- The main objective of COVID-19 diagnostic testing is to identify positive test results in situations where a result will change public health or clinical management. A single negative test should not be used to exclude infection. CDC still recommends 2 negative test results >24 hours apart if test-based strategy is desired to discontinue isolation.

## Reporting

### **Los Angeles County DPH Acute Communicable Disease Control:**

Positive COVID-19 lab results from clinical labs (not PHL) must be reported by healthcare providers within one day by fax.

- Fax a [Medical Provider COVID-19 Report Form](#) to 888-397-3778.

### **Long Beach Health and Human Services:**

- Weekdays 8am-5pm: call 562-570-4302.
- After hours: call the Duty Officer at 562-500-5537.

### **Pasadena Public Health Department:**

- Fill out the [COVID-19 Report Form](#) and fax to 626-744-6115, **and** call 626-744-6089 [Weekdays 8am-5pm (closed every other Friday) or after hours call 626-744-6043].

## Additional Resources

- **LAC DPH coronavirus webpage for Health Professionals:**  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019.htm>
- **LAC DPH coronavirus website**  
<http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- **CDC coronavirus main website**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **California Department of Public Health:**  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>

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