

HOT TIPS #113a REVISED DATE 03/26/2020

Please copy and distribute to ALL physicians at your location.

**Guidance on laboratory testing for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
in Ventura County – UPDATED FROM 3/23/2020**

In addition to the Ventura County Public Health Laboratory (VCPHL), Quest Laboratories and LabCorp are both able to provide testing for COVID-19. ARUP is no longer testing. The following is updated guidance to clarify when testing should be done, when it can be sent to VCPHL and when specimens should be sent to a commercial laboratory.

Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). The senior Communicable Disease nurse in Ventura County has noted that **a significant number of our COVID-19 patients do not initially present with these symptoms but rather with pronounced muscle and joint pain. Some of these patients also have headache. This has been supported by a physician in our County who stated that his COVID-19 disease presented in the same manner.** This is a reportable disease, so **ALL** suspect cases with COVID-19 testing pending **MUST** be reported by Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by fax to 805- 981-5200 or email to VCPH-ID@ventura.org immediately.

If you need guidance on testing instructions and criteria, please call the VCPH Physician Hotline at (888) 870-0425, option 1. If you need to consult with another physician, please select option 2. It is no longer necessary to get a Person Under Investigation (PUI) number.

Criteria for testing at VCPHL:

- Hospitalized patients who have signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 to inform decisions related to infection control or medical management.
- Residents and staff of long-term care facilities with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
- Residents and staff of correctional facilities and other congregate settings with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
- Healthcare personnel with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
- Law enforcement and pre-hospital personnel with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.

If you suspect a patient has COVID-19, you must find ways to provide care. Patients must NOT be sent to Public Health as VCPH has no capacity for patient care beyond tuberculosis and immunizations. Patients who you suspect may have COVID-19, but do not fit the above description should have their specimen tested at one of the commercial laboratories. Persons with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who are 65 years of age or older and individuals with chronic medical conditions are reasonable candidates for testing. **If you test a person for COVID-19, they should be isolated at home or in the hospital (if their symptoms merit hospitalization) while awaiting results.**

This bulletin is intended to improve the public health in our county by keeping physicians and nurses informed of noteworthy diagnoses, disease trends and other events of medical interest. Another goal of a public health department is to educate. We hope that you will use this information to increase your awareness. Please allow us to continue in our role of speaking to the press so that we may maximize the educational message to the benefit of all citizens of Ventura County.

Communicable Disease Office

2220 E Gonzales Rd suite 110, Oxnard, California 93036 • (805) 981-5201 • FAX (805) 981-5200

COVID-19 Testing Instructions

1. Specimen Collection

a. Collection of Diagnostic Respiratory Specimens

When collecting diagnostic respiratory specimens (e.g., nasopharyngeal swab) from a possible COVID-19 patient, the following should occur:

- i. HCP in the room should wear an N-95 or higher-level respirator (or facemask if a respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown.
- ii. The number of HCP present during the procedure should be limited to only those essential for patient care and procedure support. Visitors should not be present for specimen collection.
- iii. Specimen collection should be performed in a normal examination room with the door closed.
- iv. Clean and disinfect procedure room surfaces promptly

b. For initial diagnostic testing for COVID-19, CDC recommends collecting and testing an upper respiratory specimen. Nasopharyngeal specimen is the preferred choice for swab-based SARS-CoV-2 testing. When collection of a nasopharyngeal swab is not possible, the following are acceptable alternatives:

- An oropharyngeal (OP) specimen collected by a healthcare professional, or
- A nasal mid-turbinate (NMT) swab collected by a healthcare professional or by onsite self-collection (using a flocked tapered swab), or
- An anterior nares specimen (NS) collected by a healthcare professional or by onsite self-collection (using a round foam swab).

For NS, a single polyester swab with a plastic shaft should be used to sample both nares. NS or NMT swabs should be placed in a transport tube containing either viral transport medium, Amies transport medium, or sterile saline.

If both NP and OP swabs both are collected, they should be combined in a single tube to maximize test sensitivity and limit testing resources.

c. Sputum

- i. Sputum sample is acceptable
- ii. Only collect a sputum sample if there is a productive cough; do not induce cough. Collect sputum using airborne precautions.

d. Bronchoalveolar Lavage (BAL) or Endotracheal Aspirate for patients on ventilators

Please see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html> for additional information on specimen collection and updates

2. Complete a lab requisition form (*Ventura County Medical Center-affiliated clinics and hospitals may order through Cerner.*)

3. Complete a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) for all suspect and/or confirmed COVID-19 cases.

- a. VCPH requires patient name, date of birth, current address and phone number, provider phone number and fax number.
- b. **Completion of a CMR will ensure lab results are communicated to provider in a timely manner and will enhance Public Health's ability for contact tracing.**

Death Certificates and COVID-19

Please only include COVID-19 in the chain of events (107A-D) on the death certificate if there is positive laboratory confirmation; COVID-19 should not be included based on clinical symptoms consistent with COVID-19 alone.