



Public Health Department

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Health Alert

To: Butte County Clinicians and Health Care Providers

From: Andy Miller, M.D. (signed original on file)

Date: March 16, 2020

Re: Clinician Checklist for Evaluating Outpatients Who May Have COVID-19

Purpose: To provide guidance for outpatient health care providers for evaluating patients who may have COVID-19 with the goal of preventing the spread of infection and facilitating appropriate testing.

Patient Triage and Evaluation

- Place visible signage requesting visitors with a fever and cough to immediately notify healthcare staff.
- Consider options that allow for and encourage patients with fever and cough to wait in their car for evaluation. If weather allows, posting a phone or text number and asking patients with respiratory illness to call or text from their cars before entering the facility.
- Screen patients at triage for signs and symptoms of febrile respiratory illness and if present, the patient should wear a surgical mask and be placed in a private room with the door closed or separated from others by at least 6 feet.
- Provide care for all patients, irrespective of COVID-19, at the appropriate level. **DO NOT** send patients to hospital emergency rooms unless the patient's condition warrants emergency/hospital medical services.
- **DO NOT** send patients to BCPH for screening, medical evaluation, or specimen collection.
- Continue medical evaluation and empiric treatment for other causes of respiratory infection or pneumonia as clinically indicated. Providers are encouraged to test for influenza using in house rapid influenza tests and/or influenza PCR at BCPH laboratory
- Patients being tested for COVID-19 should be instructed to self-isolate at home until test result is negative.

Infection Control Precautions for Patient Interview and Exam

- Patient should be placed in a private room with the door closed and should wear a surgical mask through all healthcare worker encounters.
- Healthcare workers should adhere to Standard Precautions and use a respirator or facemask, gown, gloves, and eye protection. Respirators are preferred over a facemask, but when in short supply, should be prioritized for aerosol-producing procedures or situations requiring Airborne Precautions (e.g., measles, tuberculosis, varicella). A gown is recommended, but if in short supply, should be prioritized for procedures that generate aerosols or care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated. See CDC web link for additional details:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html

Testing Resources

Note: At this point in time, testing is NOT recommended for patients who have no signs/symptoms compatible with COVID-19. For symptomatic patients, providers currently have two options for submitting specimens:

1. **Public Health Laboratory System:** BCPH is prioritizing the following patients for testing through the public health laboratory system. The list below is not in order of priority.
 - Persons with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 plus one or more epidemiologic risks such as exposure to a person with lab-confirmed COVID-19 or domestic or international travel to an area with widespread community transmission (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>)
 - Residents of long term care facilities with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19
 - Healthcare workers and first responders suspected of being exposed to a person with COVID-19
 - Hospitalized patients with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 with no other diagnosis

If patient meets the **PUBLIC HEALTH** criteria for COVID-19 testing, call (530) 552-3929 (Monday to Friday, 8 am – 5 pm) or (530) 332-2462 (after hours, holidays, or weekends) to speak to a Communicable Diseases nurse or designee.

- Be prepared to leave a phone message with a call back number and to wait for a call back.
- **DO NOT** send specimens to BCPH Lab until the case is discussed and testing is approved by BCPH.
- If approved, see specimen collection/transport instructions below. If the healthcare provider does not have the ability to transport the specimen to the Public Health Lab, BCPH may have the ability to assist.

2. **Commercial Laboratories (ARUP, Lab Corp, Quest).** For patients with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 not meeting the criteria for testing through the public health system providers are encouraged to submit specimens through a commercial laboratory.
 - Providers may submit specimens directly to commercial laboratories without calling public health first, using commercial courier services to transport the specimens to the nearest draw station.
 - Follow the specimen collection and pick-up instructions as per your facility's designated commercial clinical laboratory. Work directly with the clinical laboratory for all questions regarding specimen collection kits (including viral transport media), storage and handling, and transport.
 - Providers needing urgent assistance with viral transport media ("specimen collection kits") may request assistance from BCPH by calling (530) 552-3929; otherwise, please work directly with the commercial laboratory for testing supplies.

Specimen Collection

- If specimens are being collected, healthcare workers must don the appropriate PPE for the mode of COVID-19 specimen collection:
Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal specimens: these procedures should be conducted wearing an N95 (or facemask if a respirator is not available), gloves, eye protection, and a gown.

- A gown is recommended, but if in short supply, should be prioritized for procedures that generate aerosols.
- In an outpatient setting, explore alternatives to collecting specimens outside (e.g., in a patient's car) in a safe manner that prevents potential exposure of staff and other patients.
- **Do NOT** send patients to BCPH or a hospital for specimen collection.
- If PPE resources are exhausted, resources requests can be sent to the Butte County MHOAC at publichealthdoc@buttecounty.net.

BCPH Lab Specimen Collection and Transport

- Collect one nasopharyngeal and one oropharyngeal swab and place BOTH swabs in one vial of viral transport media.
 - Use a synthetic fiber swab with plastic shaft (e.g., polyester or Dacron®). Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts. Place swab in a sterile tube with 2-3 ml of viral transport media.

****IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is imperative that NP and OP swabs are placed in viral transport media, such as the ones used to collect specimen NP swabs for influenza testing. Improper collection, such as placing swabs in bacterial culture media, will void the specimen and delay testing.

- A completed BCPH Lab Submittal Form for each specimen must accompany patient specimens. Transport specimens on cold pack to:
 - Butte County Public Health Laboratory
 - 695 Oleander Avenue
 - Chico, CA 95926

Disease Reporting

- Regardless of laboratory route used, all suspect cases of COVID-19 meeting the priority list above (see testing resources section) should be reported immediately to BCPH by calling (530) 552-3929 during business hours (Mon-Fri, 8 am – 5 pm) or 530-332-2462 outside business hours per Title 17, California Code of Regulations, §2500 (*Under Title 17, California Code of Regulations (CCR), failure to report is a misdemeanor (Health and Safety Code § 120295) and is a citable offense under the Medical Board of California's Citation and Fine Program (Title 16, CCR, § 1364).*

Categories of urgency levels:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action