

# COVID-19 TESTING CONSIDERATIONS

(Version 3 – Updated: May 20, 2020)

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief summary of COVID-19 testing types and guidelines, as well as potential financial coverage for testing.

## NEW Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Testing Recommendations

In addition to [CDC and Wisconsin public health labs testing priority](#), in [Health Alert #8](#), DHS recommends COVID-19 testing for asymptomatic individuals in the following situations:

1. As part of public health investigations, such as an outbreak involving multiple cases in a workplace.
2. For individuals in congregate living situations such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities
3. In health care settings, when needed to inform infection control interventions, such as before aerosol-generating procedures.
4. In community settings, when testing of close contacts of confirmed cases would inform local public health interventions, such as contact tracing investigations, or decisions about location of quarantine\* or isolation.

\*In all the above situations, negative test results should not result in discontinuation of quarantine for people who have been close contacts to known cases, and who may still be in the incubation period. In other words, COVID-19 testing can be useful for detecting unrecognized cases (“ruling in”), but not excluding infection in people who were exposed (“ruling out”).

Refer to [DHS testing information](#) for the process flow, standing order, and consent forms.

Long term care facilities should be prepared to isolate and monitor residents with positive tests, as well as to handle potential staffing challenges caused by staff who test positive and must isolate at home for a period of time.

**Note:** Refer to [M3’s Healthcare Employee Guidance and Resident Guidance documents](#) for recommendations related to COVID-19 scenarios.

## Types of Testing and How to Obtain

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is calling local public health and **every nursing home** to work with them to make a plan for diagnostic testing of all residents and staff by May 31.

Testing is not mandatory but is strongly recommended. Information they will need to know from each facility:

- How many testing collection supplies do you need to test the individuals who live and work in your facility?
  - [Submit your order for free testing collection supplies here](#). Allow 2-3 days for delivery.
- When will you test your residents and staff?
- Do you need help?
  - Do you have an ordering provider, i.e., Medical Director, attending physician, etc.?
  - Do you have staff to collect the specimens for the test?
  - Do you have staff to provide test results, education, and case management to residents and staff?
  - Do you have staff to conduct contact tracing?
  - Do you need help from local public health and/or the National Guard?
- Do you have an emergency management plan for isolating residents and for staffing?

### Diagnostic (SARS-CoV-2 virus, Nucleic acid or Viral antigen from respiratory specimen):

- Used to test if a patient is currently infected with Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)
- [CDC](#) and [DHS](#) public health labs have guidance on priorities for diagnostic testing
- Clinicians considering testing a patient should work with local/ state health department to [coordinate testing through public health labs](#), or work with commercial or clinical labs using diagnostic tests granted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by U.S. FDA.
- Consult [CDC](#), public health lab, or contracted clinical lab for specific guidelines on specimen collection, storage, and shipping.
- Per [WI DHS](#), long term care facilities (other than nursing homes or ICF/IID) are requested to test ill residents through the [Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene](#) (WSLH) for outbreaks of  $\geq 3$  residents and/ or staff with acute onset respiratory illness. Up to 3 specimens will be tested [free of charge](#).
- Emergency [supplies to facilitate lab COVID-19 testing](#) are currently available [at no charge](#) to qualifying Wisconsin clinicians, local and tribal health centers, clinical labs and others collecting specimens in response to COVID-19.
- Employees with COVID-19 symptoms should contact their personal health provider or [local public health department](#) for testing options, or complete an [online health screening](#) (in WI) [free of charge](#) and a licensed clinician will contact them. CDC also has a [self-checker](#) to guide with medical care decisions. An [at-home collection COVID-19 test by LabCorp](#) is also available.

### Antibody (Blood test):

- Used to test a patient's blood for antibodies that may show if they had a **previous** infection with Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)
- Can take 1-3 weeks to make antibodies after symptoms occur, so may not diagnose current infection
- Test results alone currently do not confirm if you are able to spread the virus that causes COVID-19
- Not yet known if antibodies to SARS-CoV2 indicates immunity from being infected again, or how long immunity lasts. More specifics on test result interpretations [here](#).
- FDA (EUA)- authorized antibody blood tests slowly becoming available to patients through healthcare provider collection to be processed at a lab.
- Employees who are minimally 3 weeks post-COVID-19 diagnosis or symptoms and who wish to have the antibody test should contact their personal health provider or public health department to see if this is available. They should also find out if antibody testing is covered under their personal health insurance plan.
- In [Health Alert #7](#), WI DHS advises, "It is not currently known whether or to what degree the presence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies confers protection from future infection. As such, it is inappropriate to use the results of antibody testing for the basis of any decisions related to returning to work or infection control practices within health care or other workplace settings."

### Reporting Suspected/Positive COVID-19 Tests and Test Results

- Patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection must be reported to public health via the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System ([WEDSS](#)) within 24 hours of sample collection for nucleic acid or antigen test
  - Refer to DHS [Health Alert #9](#) for required data elements and Patient Information Form (non-electronic reporting alternative).
- Positive or negative diagnostic test results must be reported to WEDSS.
- Only positive antibody tests must be reported to WEDSS.

## Financial Coverage for Diagnostic Testing

- Proactive nursing home testing of all staff and residents by May 31 will be provided free of charge by WI DHS.
- [COVID-19 testing is covered under Medicare Part B](#) when it is ordered by a doctor or another health care provider that accepts Medicare, and if the test was ordered after February 4, 2020. Medicare Advantage plans are required to cover all Medicare Part A and Part B services, including COVID-19 testing.
- [COVID-19 testing is covered under Medicaid](#) and reimbursed in all states as long as they are recommended by a physician or other licensed practitioner to enable him/her to identify the existence, nature or extent of illness and whether a person is sick.
- COVID-19 testing is covered under Private Health Insurance plans as long as in-network lab provider is used.
- COVID-19 testing coverage options for uninsured individuals:
  - Temporarily enroll in Medicaid before receiving testing
  - As part of the FFCRA, Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, and CARES Act, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ([HHS](#)), will provide claims reimbursement to health care providers generally at Medicare rates for testing uninsured individuals for COVID-19 and treating uninsured individuals with a COVID-19 diagnosis.
- COVID-19 testing is NOT covered by workers' compensation insurers unless certain criteria are met and the employee is confirmed positive.

\*If an employer **mandates** COVID-19 testing for an employee-- unless required and provided by the state public health lab—the employer most likely will be required to provide or pay for the testing. Contact your Occupational Health or other local provider to negotiate a contract for mandatory employee testing services.

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