



## 2020 Health Advisory #15: Updated NYC Health Department Recommendations for Identifying and Testing Patients with Suspected COVID-19

- **Molecular testing for SARS-CoV-2 is now more widely available**
- **Expanded criteria for COVID-19 molecular testing: people who are symptomatic, close contacts of someone confirmed with COVID-19, and people who work in a congregate residential setting**
- **Updated signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19**

May 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

With new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths on the decline in New York City, timely testing of people with signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or at increased risk of COVID-19 will be critical to identifying and isolating cases, identifying and monitoring potentially exposed contacts, and suppressing community spread. Recent advancements in the types of tests available and increases in testing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) mean that more people should be advised to get tested for COVID-19.

The NYC Health Department recommends that the following individuals be tested:

- **All people who are symptomatic:** Any person with new-onset signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (see below).
- **Close contacts of a person confirmed with COVID-19:** Any person, with or without symptoms, who had close contact within the previous 14 days to a person confirmed with COVID-19, especially household contacts and intimate partners.
- **Congregate residential setting staff:** Any person, with or without symptoms, who works in a congregate residential setting (such as a nursing home, shelter, or adult care facility).

Providers should use their clinical judgment to identify who should undergo diagnostic testing based on a consideration of the patient's signs and symptoms, known or possible exposure to a person with COVID-19, neighborhood epidemiology, and the likelihood illness is due to an alternative etiology. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms more commonly reported among people with COVID-19 include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever

- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting. Children have similar symptoms as adults and generally have mild illness. A newly described syndrome has been reported called [multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children \(MIS-C\)](#) that may be related to COVID-19. Children with this syndrome, previously called pediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome, or PMIS, should undergo testing for SARS-CoV-2. As with other infections, older patients may present with atypical signs or symptoms, such as delirium or falls.

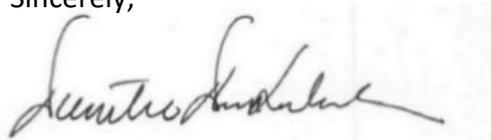
Providers are reminded to implement [universal source control](#) with face covering for everyone entering a healthcare facility, regardless of symptom, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Staff in health care facilities providing care to patients should continue to [wear a face mask while they are in the health care facility](#), regardless of the type of setting or service being provided.

Tests used for diagnostic purposes should be limited to nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT) like rRT-PCR and antigen-based tests that have been authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under an [Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\)](#). Consider diagnostic assays that use specimens that can be collected using minimal PPE. These include tests that use a specimen from a nasal swab or saliva that can be self-collected by the patient. Use of these tests will preserve PPE and reduce health care worker exposure. Check with your diagnostic laboratory to determine which specimens are appropriate for the tests they offer.

The NYC Health Department continues to update its guidance and recommendations on COVID-19 in response to the rapidly evolving situation. Providers can find the latest guidance and resources on the Health Department's [COVID-19 provider webpage](#).

We are grateful for your continued partnership in the response to this unprecedented medical and public health emergency.

Sincerely,



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Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Disease Control