



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

March 11, 2020

Dear Colleague:

This letter provides additional interim guidance on testing for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in outpatient settings. It supplements information in the March 6, 2020 clinician letter with more specific guidance and information regarding testing in an outpatient setting for primary care and urgent care providers.

- To the extent possible, providers should use telemedicine or telephonic communications to evaluate patients and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities.
- Based on the scientific evidence to date about how COVID-19 is transmitted, [newly released infection prevention guidance from CDC](#), and given shortages of N95 respirators, **MDH advises that collection of nasopharyngeal (NP) and oropharyngeal (OP) swab specimens for COVID-19 testing using contact and droplet precautions with a surgical mask is appropriate. Eye protection should always be used.** Specimen collection may be performed in an examination room with the door closed. Severely ill patients who will be transferred to a higher level of care should not be tested in an outpatient setting. **It is critical that outpatient providers continue to ensure that any patients presenting with respiratory symptoms are immediately given a facemask for source control.**
- Now that COVID-19 testing is available at commercial and hospital labs, providers should send specimens to these laboratories for testing.
- Advise any patients tested for COVID-19 to isolate themselves at home until results are back. Report any positive results immediately to the health department.

See the attached “Checklist for Outpatient Testing for COVID-19”.

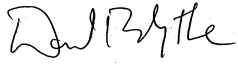
MDH will provide updated guidance to primary care providers and health systems as it becomes available. Please note that this is likely to be a rapidly changing situation and be alert for subsequent changes in guidance as additional resources become available.

Attachments: COVID-19\_checklist

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clifford S. Mitchell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Clifford S. Mitchell, MS, MD, MPH  
Director, Environmental Health Bureau

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Blythe". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

David Blythe, MD, MPH  
Director, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau