



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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

January 31, 2020

Dear Colleague:

We are writing today to share important updated guidance about **2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)** released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today, and to provide additional Maryland-specific updates and guidance.

To date, there have been no laboratory-confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV identified in Maryland. One Maryland resident has been tested to Novel Coronavirus, and that result was negative. Updated information regarding testing of Maryland residents is posted online at <https://health.maryland.gov/coronavirus>.

Updated data on U.S. and global cases can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Updated CDC Guidance on Criteria to Guide Evaluation of Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV

Today, the CDC issued updated criteria for PUI, which are available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html> and as follows:

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	A history of travel from Hubei Province , China within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset

Immediately report to your local health department any patients who meet criteria for a PUI for 2019-nCoV, or any patient for whom clinical presentation or exposure history is equivocal. If you are unable to immediately reach your local health department, notify the Maryland Department of Health at 410-767-6700 during working hours or at 410-795-7365 after working hours.

Specimen collection and testing

If the health department approves testing for 2019-nCoV for a patient, the specimens that will be requested will be:

- Two nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport media
- Lower respiratory specimen (e.g. sputum)
- Serum

This list of requested specimens is subject to change, and the health department will provide detailed guidance on a case by case basis when testing is approved. At this time, all testing for 2019-nCoV is being performed at CDC. If testing is approved, the health department will coordinate with health care providers to arrange transport of specimens first to the MDH laboratory, who will ship the specimen to CDC.

Infection Prevention and Control Guidance

CDC guidelines for infection prevention and control recommendations for Novel Coronavirus are online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control.html>. Please carefully review these. Key recommendations include:

- When scheduling appointments, instruct patients and persons who accompany them to call ahead or inform healthcare personnel upon arrival if they have symptoms of any respiratory infection and to take appropriate preventive actions (e.g., wear a facemask upon entry to contain cough, follow triage procedures).
- Implement triage procedures to detect PUI for 2019-nCoV during or before patient triage or registration. Ensure that all patients are asked about the presence of symptoms of a respiratory infection and history of travel to China.
- Ask all PUI for 2019-nCoV to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified.
- Evaluate all PUI in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room if available.
- Health care providers entering the room of a PUI should use standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions and eye protection.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/transmission-based-precautions.html>

PUIs in Outpatient Settings

If a patient being seen in an outpatient setting meets criteria for PUI, please contact your local health department immediately, who will help with the determination for testing, and next steps. Unless there is a medical requirement for the patient to be transferred to an emergency department, the patient should remain in the outpatient setting until the health department has been contacted and a plan for next steps has been determined. As this assessment process occurs, if an airborne isolation room is unavailable, ensure that the patient is in a private room with the door closed, and ask that the patient continue to wear a surgical mask if tolerated.

Clinical Guidance

CDC has also recently issued updated clinical guidance on Novel Coronavirus, including information about clinical presentation and course, and radiographic findings:

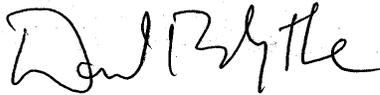
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html>

Thank you for your attention to this rapidly evolving situation. If you have questions, please contact your local health department. If you are unable to immediately reach your local health department, call the Maryland Department of Health at 410-767-6700 during working hours or at 410-795-7365 after working hours.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monique Duwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Monique" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Duwell".

Monique Duwell, MD, MPH
Chief, Center for Infectious Disease Surveillance and Outbreak Response
Maryland Department of Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Blythe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Blythe".

David Blythe, MD, MPH
Director, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau
Maryland Department of Health