



**LAC DPH Health Advisory:  
COVID-19 Guidance-Optimizing N95  
Supplies and Managing Mild Illness**

March 4, 2020



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*This message is intended for all health care providers practicing in Los Angeles County.  
Please distribute as appropriate.*

There is a very limited supply of SARS-CoV-2 testing available to Los Angeles County at this time. Until testing is more widely available, testing must be reserved for patients with severe illness and the close contacts of confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

### **Key Messages**

- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) is authorizing the adoption of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [contingency capacity strategies](#) for healthcare facilities experiencing critical shortages of N95 respirators. LAC DPH has created [guidance](#) to allow for the use of N95 respirators beyond their manufacturer-designated shelf life and the limited reuse and extended use of N95 respirators to help with increased demands and decreased supplies.
- Healthcare providers should contact LAC DPH to arrange for SARS-CoV-2 testing for any patients that meet the current LAC DPH COVID-19 Evaluation Criteria outlined in the February 29 [LAHAN](#) and included below.
- Due to the very limited supply of SARS-CoV-2 testing available to Los Angeles County at this time, testing is being restricted for use in patients with severe illness and those who are known close contacts to confirmed cases. Patients with mild illness who do not meet the current LAC DPH COVID-19 Evaluation Criteria should be instructed to follow home care instructions and do not need to be reported to LAC DPH.
- Healthcare facilities and clinics are strongly encouraged to communicate with patients, staff, and visitors about the importance of staying home when they have mild cold or flu-like symptoms.
- The CDC is hosting a [webinar](#) "COVID-19 Update—What Clinicians Need to Know to Prepare for COVID-19 in the United States" on Thursday March 5 at 11 am PST.

### **Situation**

The COVID-19 disease situation is evolving in the United States with more cases being identified and reported each day. LAC DPH has recently confirmed 6 new cases of COVID-19 bringing the total to 7 confirmed cases to date in LA County. All of the new cases have known or likely sources of exposure and none provide direct evidence of community transmission. None of these cases were linked to the first case reported in a

non-resident traveler in January.

This notification is to provide health care providers and facilities with information on maintaining supplies of N95 respirators as well as guidance on the current management of patients with mild illness who do not meet the current criteria for SARS-CoV-2 testing.

NOTE: In anticipation of increased diagnostic testing at clinical laboratories, the CDC has removed the criteria for testing and suggested expanding testing to a wider group of symptomatic patients. Please be aware that this is currently not feasible at the local level. In LA County, the only COVID-19 testing is through the LAC DPH Public Health Lab that has limited testing capacity. Public Health is aware that increased testing is needed by the medical community, is seeking to expand local testing capacity, and will provide updated information to healthcare providers as this becomes available in the future.

Health care providers are advised to check LAC DPH COVID-19 Healthcare Provider [website](#) for the most up to date guidance and resources.

### **Actions Requested of Providers**

- **Screen patients for any signs or symptoms of febrile respiratory illness.** If present, healthcare workers should don surgical masks. The patient should be instructed to wear a surgical mask and be placed in a private room with the door closed or separated from others by at least 6 feet.
- **Assess if the patient meets criteria for testing** using the *LAC DPH [Provider Checklist: Evaluating Patients Who May Have COVID-19](#)*. If the patient meets criteria, follow the guidance on additional infection control procedures and contact LAC DPH to approve specimen collection for SARS-CoV-2 testing.
- **Manage patients with mild illness at home according to their clinical status.** Due to the limited availability of SARS-CoV-2 testing at this time, patients with mild presentations who do not meet the LAC DPH COVID-19 Evaluation Criteria are not eligible to receive SARS-CoV-2 testing and do not need to be reported to DPH. Supportive care is recommended. Instruct patients to follow [home care](#) instructions including:
  - Stay home for at least 24 hours after the resolution of febrile illness without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
  - Phone their provider if symptoms worsen.

Note: Consider more active monitoring of older adults and those with co-morbid medical conditions as they may be at higher risk of developing severe disease.

## **Actions Recommended for Health Care Systems and Clinics**

- Distribute messaging to patients about [staying home when sick](#) with fever or cold or flu symptoms.
- Post [signs](#) asking visitors with fever and/or cold and flu symptoms to defer hospital visits.
- Skilled nursing facilities (SNF) should consider stopping in-person visitation of residents. Instead, virtual visitation using alternative modes of contact such as videoconferencing or telephone should be encouraged. Visitation could introduce COVID-19 into vulnerable SNF populations and should be limited as much as possible until the threat of COVID-19 has diminished.
- Remind all staff to stay home and not come to work if sick with symptoms of febrile respiratory illness until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Defer from requiring a doctor's note for return to work, when possible.
- Create systems to reduce the number of people with mild illness that present for care such as through the use of telephone triage, counseling call line, and any other means available.
- Anticipate a potentially large increase in the number of persons presenting for evaluation and clinical care related to COVID-19 in the coming weeks, including those requiring hospitalization.
- Assure adequate supplies of N95 respirators (see below for more information).
- Actively review facility pandemic readiness.

## **COVID-19 Clinical Presentation**

Clinical presentation among reported cases of COVID-19 varies in severity from mild to severe illness. Currently it is believed that many people with COVID-19 have mild, self-limited disease. Risk factors for severe illness are still being evaluated, although older patients and those with chronic medical conditions appear to be at higher risk for severe illness. Information on the clinical presentation of COVID-19 can be found in the CDC's Interim [Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).

## LAC DPH COVID-19 Evaluation Criteria

See the [February 28, 2020 LAHAN](#) for more information

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk Factors
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath)	and	Any person (including health care workers) who in the last 14 days before symptom onset has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a community-acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) <b>requiring hospitalization</b>	and	A history of travel from affected geographic areas* in the last 14 days before symptom onset
Fever <b>with</b> severe acute community acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g. pneumonia, ARDS) <b>requiring ICU care</b> without alternative explanatory diagnosis. (Must have negative rapid influenza/ RSV tests; and a negative molecular respiratory panel if this testing is available at the facility)	and	No source of exposure has been identified
<p>*Affected Geographic Areas with Widespread or Sustained Community Transmission China, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea. <i>Last updated February 28, 2020</i></p> <p>CDC defines affected areas as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with <u>at least</u> a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all <a href="#">COVID-19 Travel Health Notices</a>.</p>		

### Assure Adequate Supplies of N95 Respirators

Increased demands for N95 respirators and limited supplies could result in shortages in health care settings.

LAC DPH [Guidance for Optimizing Limited Supplies of N95 Respirators](#) provides guidance to allow for the use of N95 respirators beyond their manufacturer-designated shelf life and the limited reuse and extended use of N95 respirators to help with increased demands and decreased supplies. If this strategy is used, it is important to prepare as it requires specialized planning, training and education to ensure healthcare worker and patient safety.

In the setting of a respirator or mask shortage, healthcare facilities can apply for additional supplies through the mechanisms below. Please note that unless your facility will entirely deplete its current supply, you should defer requests until March 11, 2020 when more supplies will be available through local and state caches.

- Facilities that are part of the Reddinet should send requests through that system.
- Healthcare facilities and clinics not part of Reddinet can complete the request form [Resource Request Medical and Health \(2018\)](#) and email it to [LAEMSADutyOfficer@dhs.lacounty.gov](mailto:LAEMSADutyOfficer@dhs.lacounty.gov).

## Reporting

Patients not meeting COVID-19 evaluation criteria do not need to be reported.

### Los Angeles County DPH Acute Communicable Disease Control:

- Weekdays 8:30am–5pm: call 213-240-7941.
- After-hours: call 213-974-1234 and ask for the physician on call.

### Long Beach Health and Human Services:

- Weekdays 8am-5pm: call 562-570-4302.
- After hours: call the Duty Officer at 562-500-5537.

### Pasadena Public Health Department:

- Weekdays 8am-5pm (closed every other Friday): call 626-744-6089.
- After hours: call 626-744-6043.

## Additional Resources

- **LAC DPH coronavirus website**  
<http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- **LAC DPH coronavirus webpage for Health Professionals**



Includes travel alert posters and provider checklist

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019.htm>

- **CDC coronavirus main website**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **CDC coronavirus travel health notices**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>
- **California Department of Public Health:**  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- **World Health Organization:** <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

This communication was sent by Sharon Balter, MD, Director, Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

To view this and other communications or to sign-up to receive LAHANs, please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan>