

HEALTH ADVISORY



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2020

COVID-19 Testing Update

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation would like to update the public that the CHCC will begin to utilize Diagnostic Laboratory Services in Honolulu, Hawaii for specimen testing of COVID-19 in addition to the Guam Public Health Laboratory (GPHL). Specimens sent for testing will follow the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 3-level testing strategy:

Priority 1:

- Hospitalized patients and healthcare facility workers with symptoms

Priority 2:

- Patients in long-term care facilities with symptoms
- Patients 65 years of age or older with symptoms
- Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms
- First responders with symptoms

Priority 3:

- Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms
- Individuals who do not meet any of the above categories with symptoms
- Healthcare facility workers and first responders
- Individuals with mild symptoms in communities experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 hospitalizations

With the exception of a few specimens submitted to the CDC and the State of Hawaii Laboratory earlier this year, the majority of specimens taken from CNMI residents have been tested at the GPHL, which was the identified regional laboratory with high complexity capability for COVID-19. However, due to the recent increase of COVID-19 cases on Guam and the outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt, the GPHL is unable to respond to our testing needs, which is not for a lack of their effort, nor desire; it is simply an outcome of increased work and limited human resources.

Since the beginning of the CNMI response, CHCC has to-date collected 45 specimens, however of these specimens, one was not viable and thus moving forward, CHCC will now report specimens collected for testing absent this inviable specimen.


CNMI COVID-19 Specimen Testing Dashboard

CNMI COVID Testing Update						
Cumulative Data Reported As Of	Viral Transport Medium Available	Total Specimens Sent	Total Tests Completed	Negative Results	Positive Results	Total Pending
04/08/2020	119	47	38	27	11	9

Source: COVID Testing Database

CHCC would like to remind the public that this pandemic is affecting many countries' specimen testing capabilities. The CNMI's geographic location and small population have always influenced the scale of healthcare services and laboratory testing capabilities available in our community.

The global scientific and laboratory response to the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed for the introduction and fast-tracking of the newest technologies, which will provide smaller and remote jurisdictions like ours with testing capabilities that can be implemented on our islands. The CHCC is actively pursuing multiple testing solutions with the goal of not only being able to provide testing for our community, but to also ensure a solution that is sustainable and not dependent on external organizations.

Coronavirus COVID-19	PRIORITIES FOR TESTING PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED COVID-19 INFECTION	
COVID-19 Symptoms: Fever, Cough, and Shortness of Breath		
PRIORITY 1	Ensures optimal care options for all hospitalized patients, lessen the risk of healthcare-associated infections, and maintain the integrity of the U.S. healthcare system <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hospitalized patientsHealthcare facility workers with symptoms	1
2	PRIORITY 2 Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged <ul style="list-style-type: none">Patients in long-term care facilities with symptomsPatients 65 years of age and older with symptomsPatients with underlying conditions with symptomsFirst responders with symptoms	
PRIORITY 3	As resources allow, test individuals in the surrounding community of rapidly increasing hospital cases to decrease community spread, and ensure health of essential workers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Critical infrastructure workers with symptomsIndividuals who do not meet any of the above categories with symptomsHealthcare facility workers and first respondersIndividuals with mild symptoms in communities experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 hospitalizations	3
NON- PRIORITY	NON-PRIORITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">Individuals without symptoms	
For more information visit: coronavirus.gov		

STAY AT HOME, STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC would also like to remind the public that the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 and other illnesses is to practice:

Social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Avoid eating out at restaurants. Use drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options.
- Only one healthy adult from the household should run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklist-household-ready.html>
- Ensure 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic:

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Limiting visitors

The CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain information about COVID-19, please reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1542/1672/1352/1854 These numbers are available Monday to Sunday 7:30AM-8:00PM

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis please call the Mental Health Care Line at 285-1856/1857 These numbers are available Monday to Friday 7:30AM-4:30PM.

For more information about DIY face coverings, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For information on the overall CNMI COVID-19 response, please follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html>

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