



HEALTH ADVISORY #6 – March 5, 2020

2019 Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19)

Go to: <https://tinyurl.com/ShastaCOVID-19> for an electronic version of this Health Alert

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to reiterate local procedures and advise health care providers of new guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as follows:

- 1) Updated criteria for [evaluating and reporting Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\)](#). See related epidemiologic information below.
- 2) Process to submit specimens to Shasta County Public Health (SCPH) for testing

Key Messages:

- Healthcare providers should perform **clinical assessment** and **exposure risk assessment** to determine whether testing for COVID-19 may be appropriate. Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including influenza.
- Requests for testing should be limited to patients with **symptoms** compatible with COVID-19. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever (subjective or objective) and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing).
- Epidemiologic factors to guide **exposure risk assessment** and decisions on whether to test Shasta County Residents include: any persons, including healthcare workers, who have had close contact¹ with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset, or a history of international travel from countries with sustained community transmission defined as CDC Level 2 or 3 Travel Notices (currently **China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, and Japan**) within 14 days of symptom onset. Check the [CDC website for updates on international areas with sustained community transmission](#). If you otherwise suspect exposure to a COVID-19, SCPH may consider testing on a case by case basis. Please call to discuss.
- **For patients requiring further assessment or hospitalization, contact the emergency department in advance of referral or ambulance transport.**

PLEASE NOTE: Specimens must be collected by the health care facility and discussed with public health prior to submission. SCPH will require demographic, clinical and epidemiologic information on patient.

Laboratory testing for COVID-19:

- As of March 5th diagnostic testing for COVID-19 is being performed at the California Department of Public Health and CDC and must be requested through SCPH. See contact information below.
- Collect oral pharyngeal and nasopharyngeal specimens using synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. NP and OP specimens should be kept in separate vials with a completed requisition form **for each specimen**.

Local Contact Information for Reporting and Testing - COVID-19:

- Contact Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Branch (SCPH) by phone at 530-225-5591 during business hours or 530-395-0132 after hours, weekends, and holidays with questions about whether patients meet criteria for PUI.
- Specimen collection kits (swab, tube, transport media, requisition form) may be requested from the Shasta County Public Health lab. For questions about specimen collection, packaging and handling, contact the lab at 530-225-5072.

“Engaging individuals, families and communities to protect and improve health and wellbeing.”

Brandy Isola, Branch Director

Karen Ramstrom, DO, MSPH, Health Officer

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Specimen transport

- Healthcare providers in Redding may request courier pickup of approved specimens through the SCPH lab.
- Providers outside Redding should transport approved specimens to SCPH lab on cold packs refrigerated at 2-8°Celsius.

Initial management of patients meeting the above criteria or otherwise suspected of COVID-19:

- Ensure the patient is using a surgical mask; isolate in an airborne isolation or single room with closed door; use standard/contact/airborne precautions, including eye protection (fit-tested N-95 mask, gloves, gown, face shield or goggles)
- Evaluate for other causes including influenza.
- Contact Shasta County Public Health for questions and for submission of specimens for COVID-19 testing. Shasta County Public Health does *not* collect specimens.
- After specimen collection, instruct the patient to self-isolate at home pending test results.

- **Implement [strategies](#) to conserve N-95 respirators and surgical masks**

¹Close contact is defined as—

a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case – *or* –

b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on). If such contact occurs while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection), criteria for PUI consideration are met.

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