

# FAX

**To:** \_\_\_\_\_ **From: George Christides, MD**

**Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Pages:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date: March 9, 2020**

**Re: COVID-19** \_\_\_\_\_ **CC:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note:**

Dear AppleCare Network Physicians,

As you may have seen in the news this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that the potential global public health threat posed by COVID-19 (formerly known as coronavirus) is high.

Please see attached the following resources to help support your office team and patients:

- 1) Department of Public Health Clinician Checklist
- 2) Office Sign for Patients
- 3) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Patients

For more information or to download these resources, please visit the LA County Department of Public Health website at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019.htm/>.

For suspected cases, immediately call the County of LA County Department of Public Health Department to assist with diagnosis and infection control at **(213) 240-7941**.

Thank you,

George Christides, MD  
Chief Medical Officer

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# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Clinician Check List: Evaluating Patients Who May Have COVID-19

The purpose of this checklist is to provide guidance for evaluation of patients who may have COVID-19, with the goal of preventing the spread of infection and expediting an investigation with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) and testing through Public Health Laboratory (PHL), if indicated.

**Medical providers needing assistance with diagnosis and infection control can call:**  
**LAC DPH Acute Communicable Disease Control (ACDC)**

**(213) 240-7941** (8:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday) **(213) 974-1234** (After Hours Emergency Operator)

**☐ Step 1. Identify patients who may have a febrile respiratory illness.**

- 1a. Place visible signage requesting visitors with a fever and recent international travel to immediately notify a healthcare staff (COVID-19 [travel alert poster](#) in 9 languages on ACDC COVID-19 website).
- 1b. Screen patients at triage for signs or symptoms of febrile respiratory illness and if present, the patient should wear a surgical mask and be placed in a private room with the door closed or separated from others by at least 6 feet.
- 1c. Ensure all healthcare workers interacting with the patient don a surgical mask.

**☐ Step 2. Implement infection control precautions for patient interview and exam.**

- 2a. Patient should be in a private room with the door closed and should wear the surgical mask through all healthcare worker encounters.
- 2b. Healthcare providers should wear a surgical mask, gloves, and eye protection. A gown is recommended.

**☐ Step 3. Determine if the patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.**

- 3.a. Does the patient meet the LAC DPH Public Health Lab (PHL) COVID-19 Testing Criteria?<sup>1,2</sup>

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	<b>AND</b>	Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a community-acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	<b>AND</b>	A history of travel from affected geographic areas (see below) within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever with severe acute community acquired lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring ICU care 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)	<b>AND</b>	No source of exposure has been identified

**Affected Geographic Areas\* with Widespread or Sustained Community Transmission:** China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea *Last updated February 28, 2020*

\*Affected areas are defined as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with at least a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all [COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#).

- <sup>1</sup>. Refer to the [CDC Guidance for Health Professionals](#) for definitions of fever, hospitalization, close contact, and laboratory-confirmed: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>
- <sup>2</sup>. The LAC DPH COVID-19 evaluation criteria differ from the CDC's and are intended to prioritize SARS-CoV2 testing in a setting of limited local testing capacity. Providers should keep in mind that these evaluation criteria were developed to identify patients at the highest risk for COVID-19.

→ **IF YES, patient meets LAC DPH PHL COVID-19 Testing Criteria:**

- 3bi. Call LAC DPH and an on-call physician will advise on the next steps.  
**(213) 240-7941 from 8:00am-5:00pm Monday to Friday and (213) 974-1234 (After Hours Emergency Operator)**
- 3bii. **DO NOT** collect or send specimens to PHL until the case is discussed and testing is approved by DPH (see PHL specimen collection/transport instructions on page 3).

→ **If NO, patient does NOT meet LAC DPH PHL COVID-19 Testing Criteria:**

- 3c. If patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 per CDC clinical criteria: specimens can be collected and submitted to a clinical laboratory with COVID-19 testing capability. Follow the specimen collection and pick-up instructions as per the clinical laboratory.

**4. Health care workers must don the appropriate PPE for the mode of COVID-19 specimen collection:**

- **Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal sampling:** these procedures should be conducted wearing gloves, eye protection, and either a surgical mask or N95 respirator. Gowns are recommended.
- **High risk aerosol generating procedures such as sputum induction or bronchoscopy require a higher level of PPE:** these procedures require gowning, gloving, N95 respirator and eye protection.

**Step 5. Continue medical evaluation and empiric treatment for other causes of respiratory infection or pneumonia as clinically indicated.**

- All patients with suspected COVID-19 should also be assessed for common causes of respiratory infection and pneumonia as clinically indicated.

**Step 6. Patient Disposition**

- **Hospitalized:** Do not discharge hospitalized patient without prior approval from LAC DPH. Continue patient isolation (ideally negative pressure isolation room) and infection control procedures.
- **Non-hospitalized patients being tested for COVID-19:** Instruct patient to self-isolate. Patients should follow [home isolation instructions](#) until their test result is negative or until they are told by LAC DPH or their health care provider that they are no longer infectious. Patient should be advised to not use public transportation or taxis.

## Public Health Lab Specimen Collection and Transport:

**DO NOT collect or send specimens to the Public Health Lab (PHL) until instructed to by DPH.**

Collect one upper respiratory specimen from the patient and one lower respiratory specimen (for patients with productive cough) as soon as possible regardless of symptom onset.

Note: outpatient settings should only collect an NP/OP swab.

### 5a. Upper Respiratory

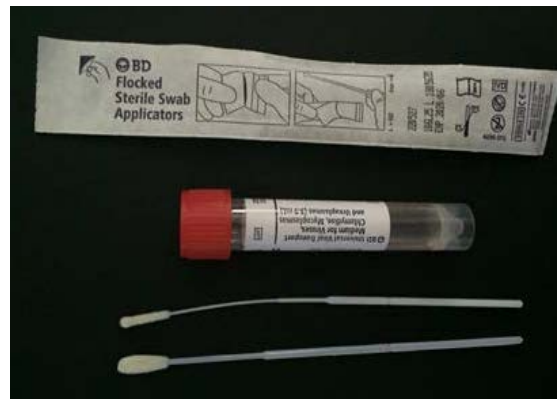
- **Nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab (NP/OP swab)** Use a synthetic fiber swab with plastic shaft. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts. Place swab in a sterile tube with 2-3 ml of viral transport media Do NOT combine NP/OP swab specimens; keep swabs in separate viral transport media collection tubes.
- **Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate:** 2-3 mL in a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

### 5b. Lower Respiratory (for patients with productive cough)

- **Bronchoalveolar lavage or tracheal aspirate:** 2-3 mL in a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.
- **Sputum:** Have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

#### NOTE:

- It is imperative that NP and OP swabs are placed in viral transport media, such as ones used to collect specimen NP swabs for influenza testing (see figure to the right). Each swab must be placed into a separate vial
- Improper collection, such as placing swabs in bacterial culture media, will void the specimen and delay testing.



## TRANSPORT INFORMATION

- Refrigerate specimens at 2-8°C and transport on cold pack.
- Complete a PHL H-3021 Test Requisition form for *each specimen*. Please use the prefilled LAC DPH test request forms for COVID-19 testing available on the [DPH COVID-19 website](#). Note there are two different forms:
  - Form to be used for NP swabs that request testing for SARS-CoV-2 (formerly known as novel coronavirus-2019) and Biofire panel
  - Form to be used for all other specimens that request testing for SARS-CoV-2
- Test request forms MUST include full patient name, date of birth, hospital medical record number, sex, date/time collected, specimen source, and the hospital where the specimen was collected.
- Upon approval by LAC DPH, the PHL will contact your laboratory to discuss specimen transfer. Specimens that arrive at PHL without prior DPH approval may experience significant delays in testing.

# **FAQs for Patients:**

## **COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

*Updated: March 6, 2020*

### **What is the coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause illness in both animals and people. The 2003 SARS outbreak, also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, is a well-known coronavirus. In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a new coronavirus outbreak, now called COVID-19, which was first detected in China. While there is limited information about COVID-19 currently available, our number-one priority is to support the health and safety of our patients.

### **How does COVID-19 spread?**

This is an emerging virus, so there are still many unknowns. Currently, it is unclear how easily or effectively the virus is spreading between people. As with all respiratory viruses, it is advisable to limit close contact (within six feet) with an infected person. Coronaviruses are also spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching an infected surface or object and then touching your own mouth, nose or eyes. For the most updated information about COVID-19, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms are similar to an upper respiratory infection and may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

More cases of COVID-19 are expected to be diagnosed, much like the other epidemics that we have experienced over the last 15 years. But it is important to know that 80% of COVID-19 cases are mild or without symptoms. Like the seasonal flu, COVID-19 infection is more severe in patients with chronic underlying health conditions and the elderly.

### **What if I think I was exposed to COVID-19?**

If you believe you may have been exposed to the virus, it is recommended you avoid public places, including public transportation. Call your local public health agency immediately to ask for guidance prior to making an emergency room visit. This will help limit exposure to the general public.

### **Is there a treatment for COVID-19?**

At present, there is no specific treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. If you become infected, you will receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. You can help prevent the spread of the virus by following the steps listed on the CDC's coronavirus website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/)

### **How can I protect myself from COVID-19?**

Until there are more answers, you are advised to follow good prevention practices, including:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like your phone or computer
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue in the trash
- Stay home when you are sick
- While a flu shot does not prevent COVID-19, it's still good to protect yourself against influenza and schedule a flu shot

### **Will wearing a mask prevent me from getting the virus?**

No, surgical masks do not protect people from COVID-19. It's a small virus that can fit through the mask or along the edges where there are gaps. Surgical masks are most effective at controlling spread of the virus from a source or infected person. Surgical masks should not be used by healthy people for "protection" from coronavirus – it will not provide protection and will deplete the limited stock needed for use by sick individuals.

### **Is there guidance related to international travel?**

Currently, the WHO and CDC recommend that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Italy, South Korea, and Iran. This situation is evolving, so please visit the CDC website for the latest guidance.

### **Are there other things I should do to prepare?**

Even though the trajectory of the virus is unknown, the CDC says that now is a good time to assess individual and family preparedness but advised that preparations do not need to go beyond what is needed for a natural disaster or an infrastructure disruption. Preparedness typically includes making a plan, making a kit, and staying informed.

### **Where can I find more information about COVID-19?**

This situation is fluid and evolving quickly. For the latest information, guidance and travel alerts, visit the CDC's COVID-19 homepage and the World Health Organization website. Understanding the facts around the virus will help reduce stigma and panic.

### **Resources**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [cdc.gov/coronavirus/](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/)
- Department of Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness - [ready.gov/plan](https://ready.gov/plan)
- World Health Organization COVID-19 - [who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - [publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/)
- Orange County Public Health - [ohealthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel\\_coronavirus](https://ohealthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel_coronavirus)

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# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Alert!

If you have:



+



OR



Been in **contact** with someone with coronavirus OR been **out of the country** in the last 14 days

A fever

Cough or shortness of breath



APPLECARE  
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Please tell a staff member *immediately* and they will provide you with a mask.