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PROVIDERS URGED TO TEST WIDELY

Updated Guidelines for COVID-19 Testing

Controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the community requires identification of cases and their close contacts so that individuals can isolate or quarantine at home. COVID-19 disease may present with nonspecific viral symptoms or without symptoms; testing is necessary to diagnose COVID-19.

Testing guidelines have expanded since SARS-CoV-2 first emerged in Washington. Attached are the current recommendations.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Interim-2019NovelCoronavirusQuicksheetProviders.pdf>.

BFHD encourages providers to test widely to ensure early identification of COVID-19 disease. This may include asymptomatic persons if they have had an exposure or close contact with someone with COVID-19 two to 14 days prior.

Testing for COVID-19 is also indicated as part of outbreak investigation and containment. BFHD, with the assistance of community health partners, has facilitated testing on site as the preferred method for assessing the extent of the outbreaks. When on-site testing is not feasible or available, individuals are advised to request testing through their own health care providers. Providers are not required to order COVID-19 testing, but BFHD is asking for cooperation to ensure that there are no missed opportunities when persons need to be tested.

If your clinic is unable to perform specimen collection, please check BFHD website for a list of testing sites.

<https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=10766056&pageId=16774440> Plans are underway for a community testing site as well.

Molecular assays for SARS-CoV-2 RNA may remain positive for several weeks following infection. It has not been correlated with infectivity. Therefore, it is not recommended to require employees to demonstrate a “test of cure” with a negative test for COVID-19 after they have been infected. While the test-based strategy is still included in CDC’s discontinuation of isolation for persons with COVID-19 not in healthcare settings guidance, it acknowledges reports of “prolonged detection of RNA without direct correlation to viral culture.”