

March 11, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) is providing this update regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

### 1. Updated infection control guidance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released [interim infection prevention and control recommendations](#) for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in healthcare settings (full guidance available [here](#)).

Current evidence suggests that person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 happens during close exposure to an infected person, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person coughs or sneezes. In their new guidance, CDC highlights that facemasks are an acceptable alternative for clinical care of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, especially when supply chains are limited. Current World Health Organization [guidance](#) recommends facemask, gown, gloves and eye protection for healthcare workers providing direct care to COVID-19 patients (for non- aerosol-generating procedures).

As such, TDH recommends:

Setting	Target Personnel	Activity	Type of PPE or procedure
Triage	Healthcare personnel	Preliminary screening (not direct contact)	Maintain spatial distance of >3 ft No specific PPE required for HCP
	Patient with respiratory symptoms	Any	Place surgical mask on patient Minimize time in waiting room
Patient Room	Healthcare personnel	Direct patient care	Gown, gloves, facemask, eye protection (goggles or face shield)
	Healthcare personnel	Specimen collection <sup>1</sup>	Gown, gloves, facemask, eye protection (goggles or face shield) *Depending on PPE supply, consider use of N-95 respirator if there is concern about aerosol generation during specimen collection (no AIIR required)
	Healthcare personnel	Aerosol-generating procedures <sup>2</sup>	Gown, gloves, N-95 respirator, eye protection (goggles or face shield)
	Patient with respiratory symptoms	Routine clinical care	To the degree possible, patients with respiratory symptoms should wear a surgical mask during encounters with the healthcare team

<sup>1</sup> [Preferred](#) specimen type is an NP swab and OP swab combined into a single collection vial.

<sup>2</sup> Aerosol generating procedures include (but are not limited to) sputum induction, airway suctioning, endotracheal intubation, bronchoscopy, positive pressure ventilation (BiPAP, CPAP), nebulizer treatment, and tracheostomy care.

## **2. TDH patient prioritization for COVID-19 testing**

When commercial diagnostic capacity for COVID-19 is widely available, TDH will prioritize testing at our State Public Health Laboratory for patients that meet the following criteria:

1. Contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case
2. Travel to a high-risk international or domestic location with evidence of widespread community transmission
3. Pregnant women or immunocompromised persons
4. High-risk occupation (healthcare worker, work with elderly/at-risk populations)
5. Severe pneumonia / acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) of unknown etiology

Clinicians and medical facilities may utilize commercial or hospital laboratories without TDH approval. Please note: COVID-19 is currently an immediately reportable condition in Tennessee. Laboratory-confirmed cases can be reported to TDH by calling 615-741-7247.

## **3. Tennessee situation update**

As of today, we have 9 COVID-19 cases in Tennessee. This information is currently being shared at the county-level on our [website](#). TDH is working with regional and local health department partners to investigate and implement contact tracing and follow up. While most early cases have reported relevant travel histories, we are anticipating an increasing number of cases which may not have a clear epidemiologic link indicating wider transmission within communities.

## **4. CDC Clinician Outreach & Communication Activity (COCA) Call on March 12, 2020**

CDC has scheduled another COCA call on Thursday, March 12, 2020 from 2:00–3:00 EDT. The content will focus on current information about COVID-19 as it relates to children and pregnant women. Call information is available [here](#).

Please share this message widely with healthcare partners. You can continue to access up-to-date information on the [COVID-19 website](#) including a [TDH weekly situation summary](#).

Thank you for all that you do in keeping Tennesseans safe and healthy.  
Tennessee Department of Health