

**HOT TIPS #113** DATE 03/23/2020

Please copy and distribute to ALL physicians at your location.

**Guidance on laboratory testing for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)  
in Ventura County – UPDATED FROM 3/12/2020**

In addition to the Ventura County Public Health Laboratory (VCPHL), Quest Laboratories and LabCorp are both able to provide testing for COVID-19. ARUP is no longer testing. The following is updated guidance to clarify when testing should be done, when it can be sent to VCPHL and when specimens should be sent to a commercial laboratory.

Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). The senior Communicable Disease nurse in Ventura County has noted that **a significant number of our COVID-19 patients do not initially present with these symptoms but rather with pronounced muscle and joint pain. Some of these patients also have headache.** This has been supported by a physician in our County who stated that his COVID-19 disease presented in the same manner. This is a reportable disease, so ALL suspect cases with COVID-19 testing pending MUST be reported by Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by fax to 805-981-5200 immediately.

**You must contact the VCPH COVID-19 Physician Hotline at 888 870-0425 prior to specimen collection for patient testing at the VCPH Laboratory. It is no longer necessary to get a Person Under Investigation (PUI) number.**

Criteria for testing at VCPHL:

- Hospitalized patients who have signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 to inform decisions related to infection control or medical management.
- Residents and staff of long-term care facilities with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
- Residents and staff of correctional facilities and other congregate settings with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
- Healthcare personnel with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.

**If you suspect a patient has COVID-19, you must find ways to provide care. Patients must NOT be sent to Public Health as VCPH has no capacity for patient care beyond tuberculosis and immunizations.** Patients who you suspect may have COVID-19, but do not fit the above description should have their specimen tested at one of the commercial laboratories. Persons with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who are 65 years of age or older and individuals with chronic medical conditions are reasonable candidates for testing. **If you test a person for COVID-19, they should be isolated at home or in the hospital (if their symptoms merit hospitalization) while awaiting results.**

This bulletin is intended to improve the public health in our county by keeping physicians and nurses informed of noteworthy diagnoses, disease trends and other events of medical interest. Another goal of a public health department is to educate. We hope that you will use this information to increase your awareness. Please allow us to continue in our role of speaking to the press so that we may maximize the educational message to the benefit of all citizens of Ventura County.

**Communicable Disease Office**

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