



# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Public Health  
Division

## LOCAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19: TESTING & REPORTING (revised March 18, 2020)

### Clinical Assessment:

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. **Asymptomatic patients should NOT be tested. The COVID-19 test has not been validated for asymptomatic patients.**

**People with mild symptoms should be encouraged to stay home; they do not necessarily need to be tested.** These patients should be instructed to contact their healthcare provider by phone should symptoms worsen. Older patients and individuals who have underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their physician early in the course of even mild illness.

**Patients who have severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek care immediately.**

**Symptomatic patients requiring testing should be counseled to self-isolate until test results are obtained.**

Providers can review CDC's guidance for prioritizing COVID-19 testing as well as evaluating patients here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-criteria.html> (last updated 3/9/2020)

### There are currently two testing options for COVID-19:

- I. **For patients suspected to have COVID-19, providers may send specimens directly to commercial laboratories WITHOUT notifying Public Health about testing. *However*, if the patient is suspected for COVID-19 and associated with a **vulnerable population**, please promptly **call** the Communicable Disease Unit at 831-454-4114 and **submit a CDC Person Under Investigation (PUI) form** via fax 831-454-5049 or secure email [HSACD@santacruzhealth.us](mailto:HSACD@santacruzhealth.us).**
- II. **If a patient meets clinical and/or epidemiological criteria, providers may choose to coordinate with Santa Cruz County Public Health to send specimens to a Public Health Lab (PHL).**

*\*\* See next page for PHL testing instructions \*\**

### Specimen collection:

Collect a nasopharyngeal swab (NP) in viral transport media or equivalent. Collection of sputum should only be done for those patients with productive coughs. Induction of sputum is not recommended. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset. Additional specimen collection guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>

### Reporting:

**Report all lab-positive cases of COVID-19 by immediately CALLING the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) at 831-454-4114.** If after hours or on weekends, call 831-471-1170 and ask for the Health Officer. If you have not already submitted a PUI form, also fill and fax to CDU at (831) 454-5049 or send a secure email [HSACD@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:HSACD@santacruzcounty.us) Once reported, Public Health will contact positive cases to conduct a disease investigation and provide further instructions. *CDC PUI form:* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/reporting-pui.html>

Providers remain responsible for notifying their patients of all positive and negative test results.

Local patient guidance documents will be posted in the "Healthcare Provider Information" section, as available, here: [www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus).

### **To order COVID-19 testing through a Public Health Lab:**

1. **Screen** patient for eligibility (i.e., meeting one of the scenarios below):
  - a. Patient is referred from Public Health’s Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) for COVID-19 testing through a Public Health Lab.
  - b. Fever (subjective or confirmed) OR signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath); AND close contact with a lab-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
  - c. Fever (subjective or confirmed) AND signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization; AND a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset. A current list of affected geographic areas can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers>
  - d. Fever (subjective or confirmed) with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g. pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g. influenza); AND no source of exposure has been identified.

(If criteria is not met, specimen will not be approved to be sent to a PHL. Clinician can decide to test with a commercial lab.)

2. **If criteria is met, complete CDC PUI form and CALL** the Communicable Disease Unit at 831-454-4114 to request authorization for public health lab testing. Authorization is available Monday-Sunday, 8am – 5pm.
  - a. CDC Person Under Investigation (PUI) form: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/reporting-pui.html>
  - b. Send PUI form to CDU via FAX to (831) 454-5049 or secure email [HSACD@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:HSACD@santacruzcounty.us)
3. **If approved, obtain a PUI ID number from the Communicable Disease Unit.**
  - a. Store specimens until authorization is received. If unable to store or freeze specimens while waiting for authorization, send the specimen to a commercial lab.
4. **If authorization is received:**
  - a. **Complete “COVID-19 Submittal Form for Public Health Lab Testing” form**
    - i. <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/20200317%20PH%20COVID19%20Lab%20Testing%20Form.pdf>
  - b. **Include PUI ID** on the PUI form, as well as the Lab Submittal Form
  - c. **Proceed with shipping** by following instructions posted under the “Healthcare Provider and Lab Information” webpage section at: [www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus)
    - i. “Instructions for Facilities Capable of Shipping Directly to Santa Clara County Public Health Lab”
    - ii. “Instructions for Facilities Not Capable of Shipping Directly”

### **Additional Information and Guidance for COVID-19:**

California Department of Public Health, guidance documents:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 guidance:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>

County of Santa Cruz, Public Health – local updates and guidance:  
[www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus)

[This local guidance is an addendum to the Provider Alert sent 3/13/2020, revised 3/18/2020.](#)