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## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

**To:** Health Care Providers  
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**Subject:** Updated Guidance for COVID-19: Prioritization of Testing and Discontinuation of Home Isolation  
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## Updated Guidance for COVID-19: Prioritization of Testing and Discontinuation of Home Isolation

### Prioritization of testing of individuals in high-risk categories

US CDC's guidelines on [Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#) define Moderate community transmission as, "Widespread and/or sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings with potential for rapid increase in suspected cases." According to US CDC, at that level and when testing capacity is limited, public health control activities may require prioritization of testing to high-risk individuals.

Maine now meets US CDC's criteria for a Moderate level of community transmission. At present, a limited national supply of laboratory materials inhibits Maine's testing capacity. Maine may also need to limit testing if such shortages continue. Therefore, consistent with [US CDC guidelines](#), Maine is now creating a prioritization system to test to individuals in high-risk categories.

To preserve Maine's specimen collection and testing supplies for patients who may develop severe COVID-19 illness over the coming months, effective immediately, Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) will prioritize testing to high-risk individuals. Individuals who will be tested must be symptomatic (fever or respiratory symptoms) and fall into one of the following high-risk categories:

- Those who are hospitalized
- Health care workers
- First responders (e.g., EMS Police, Fire,)

- Those living in a congregate setting (e.g., LTCFs, group homes, assisted living facilities, jails, shelters)
- Patients older than 60 years
- Patients with underlying medical conditions

Testing within these categories may be prioritized further based on availability of laboratory materials.

Individuals whose symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 but who do not fall into one of these high-risk categories should be evaluated and isolated at home. Testing is not recommended for those individuals with mild fever or respiratory symptoms who are not in a high-risk category because:

1. Presenting for testing potentially exposes the public, healthcare workers, and vulnerable persons to COVID-19.
2. Confirming infection does not change how most illness is managed.

Samples submitted from asymptomatic individuals (as indicated on the submission form) will be rejected.

### **Guidance on discontinuation of home isolation**

On March 16, 2020, US CDC released [Interim Guidance on Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Persons with COVID-19](#). **Discontinuation of home isolation can now be done without additional testing.**

1. **For individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are completing their recovery at home:**
  - Self-isolate until
    - o At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*,
    - AND**
    - o At least 72 hours (3 days) have passed *since recovery* – which is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms.
  - All asymptomatic close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home (self-quarantine) for 14 days from the last day of exposure.
2. **For individuals with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who are not tested, or who are awaiting their test results:**
  - self-isolate until
    - o At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*,
    - AND**
    - o At least 72 hours (3 days) have passed *since recovery* – which is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms. Any symptomatic close contacts should follow the same guidance as a close contact.
3. Any test-based strategy for release from isolation should account for: (1) presenting for testing potentially exposes the public, healthcare workers, and vulnerable persons to COVID-19; (2) the availability of testing supplies and laboratory capacity; and (3) convenient access to testing.

Specific criteria for health care workers are set forth here: “Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19” (Interim Guidance). See the Interim Guidance at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html> for further details.

**For more information on the Guidance summarized above:**

- U.S. CDC guidelines on Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>
- U.S. CDC Interim Guidance on Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>.
- U.S. CDC Interim Guidance on Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html>
- Maine CDC's COVID-19 website [www.maine.gov/dhhs/coronavirus](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/coronavirus) or by calling Maine CDC at **1-800-821-5821**.
- U.S. CDC's COVID-19 website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>