

# COVID-19 (formerly 2019-nCoV pneumonia) Frequently Asked Questions for Healthcare Workers

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These FAQs are for Healthcare Workers. For general FAQs, please read [2019-nCoV FAQ](#).

## *Acronyms and abbreviations used in this document:*

- **COVID-19:** name for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus
- **SARS-CoV-2:** name of the virus causing COVID-19 disease
- **AIIR:** Airborne Infection Isolation Room
- **CDC:** US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- **HDOH:** State of Hawaii Department of Health
- **PUI:** Patient Under Investigation
- **RVP:** Respiratory Viral Panel

## **OVERVIEW**

### **What are the current criteria for a patient to be evaluated as a Patient Under Investigation (PUI)?**

Please adhere to [CDC's criteria](#).

### **What should I do if I think my patient meets PUI criteria?**

Please refer to the CDC Flowchart to Identify and Assess 2019 Novel Coronavirus.

If you believe your patient meets PUI criteria, immediately notify your hospital's infection control personnel (if applicable) and HDOH's Disease Outbreak Control Division.

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line)..... (808) 586-4586  
Maui District Health Office..... (808) 984-8213  
Kauai District Health Office..... (808) 241-3563  
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo)..... (808) 933-0912  
Big Island District Health Office (Kona)..... (808) 322-4877  
After hours on Oahu..... (808) 600-3625  
After hours on neighbor islands.....(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

Ask the PUI to wear a surgical mask and place them in an Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR room) if available. If unavailable, place them in a private room with the door closed. Ensure all healthcare personnel entering the patient's room wear, at minimum, a surgical mask, eye protection, gown, and gloves (standard, contact, and droplet precautions). N95 respirators should be used for NP swab collection and for aerosol-generating and invasive procedures.

Do not delay specimen collection. Prioritize obtaining two nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs as well as any other specimens needed to adequately manage the patient.

**Are we required to report to HDOH any patients that recently returned from China, if they are not experiencing signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (formerly 2019-nCoV pneumonia)?**

- You are required to report people who meet the current [CDC PUI criteria](#).
- Additionally, if you encounter a patient who traveled from mainland China within the last 14 days and has fever or respiratory symptoms that DO NOT meet PUI criteria, contact HDOH (contact info above) to discuss whether SARS-CoV-2 (formerly 2019-nCoV) testing, isolation, and public health monitoring are warranted.
- You are not required to report to HDOH patients who traveled to mainland China and are NOT experiencing any signs or symptoms.

**What is the name of the virus and disease?**

The *virus* has been determined to be a sister virus of SARS-CoV and has been named SARS-CoV-2. The *disease* that this virus causes has been named COVID-19. HDOH is updating our materials with the new nomenclature. For more information about the name, please see our [2019-nCoV FAQ](#) for the general public.

**INFECTION CONTROL**

**Should healthcare workers wear surgical masks or N95 respirators when treating patients with suspected SARS-CoV-2 (formerly 2019-nCoV) infection?**

N95 masks should be worn for NP swab collection and aerosol-generating procedures. For initial patient evaluation (e.g., history taking and exam), surgical masks could be sufficient if a surgical mask is placed on the patient, and if used in full adherence with appropriate standard, contact, and droplet precautions including eye protection.

**Are negative pressure rooms necessary to care for a patient?**

If possible, PUIs should be placed in negative pressure (“AIIR”) rooms. If none are available, the PUI should be placed in a private room with the door shut. The absence of a negative pressure room does not preclude initial evaluation and treatment of a PUI. If the PUI requires a higher level of care or any aerosol-generating procedures, they should be moved to a facility where they can be cared for in a negative pressure room.

**Do healthcare workers who were recently in China need to be excluded from work?**

Per [CDC guidance for Healthcare Personnel](#), healthcare workers who were in China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan) and returned to Hawaii on or after February 3, 2020 are considered “medium risk” or “high risk” depending on where they were in China, and *should not* return to work until 14 days after departing China. During those 14 days, they will be asked to self-monitor for symptom development under public health supervision.

## **SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND TESTING**

### **How many NP swabs do we need to collect?**

For patients meeting PUI criteria, collect at least two NP swabs. One is to be shipped to the State Laboratories Division (SLD) to be tested for SARS-CoV-2 either at SLD once the test is available locally, or at CDC. The other is for performing a Respiratory Pathogen Panel (RPP) to evaluate for other viral and bacterial pathogens. RPP testing should be performed at clinical laboratories. If there is concern that RPP testing cannot be performed in a timely manner by a clinical laboratory, please contact the Disease Outbreak Control Division (see contact info above).

For patients with history of travel from mainland China (not including Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan) within 14 days of symptom onset, but not requiring hospitalization, HDOH also recommends RPP testing.

For patients who have fever and respiratory symptoms that do not meet PUI criteria and have no history of travel to China, consider influenza testing by PCR to rule out influenza.

**Is the sputum and blood no longer needed?** For any PUI, NP swabs are the priority. If the patient has a productive cough, then sputum should also be collected. Induction of sputum for collection is not indicated. Additional specimens (e.g., oropharyngeal swab, serum, urine) may be requested after consultation with HDOH, depending on the clinical setting and presentation (these specimens are more likely to be requested if patient is hospitalized).

### **Can any laboratory in Hawaii test for SARS-CoV-2 (formerly 2019-nCoV)? When will SLD be able to test for it?**

Both SLD and Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC) will have testing capacity once the required verification process is complete at both laboratories. However, testing at TAMC is reserved only for Department of Defense purposes. During the validation process, state public health labs across the country reported inconclusive results. To address this, CDC will be sending all public health laboratories replacements in the next week. Until then, CDC will continue to be the only laboratory capable of testing for SARS-CoV-2 in the United States. All testing must be cleared through a discussion with a healthcare provider who then provides the specimen to HDOH.

### **Is there specific guidance for laboratory personnel regarding handling of specimens and packing, shipping and transport?**

Yes, please refer to CDC's [2019-nCoV Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines](#).

## **HEALTHCARE WORKER EXPOSURE RISK AND MONITORING**

### **What if I think I have been exposed to someone I suspect may have COVID-19 (formerly 2019-nCoV pneumonia)?**

Please refer to CDC's interim guidance for [Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure to 2019-nCoV](#), released February 8, 2020 and updated regularly. For providers in healthcare

facilities or healthcare system settings, immediately notify infection control personnel. Hospital infection control personnel should coordinate with HDOH's Disease Outbreak Control Division (contact information above) for monitoring of any healthcare workers with potential exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection. Otherwise, HDOH will work directly with the healthcare provider and staff to address any issues, including monitoring.

**Where can I find more information?**

For more information about COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html). You can also visit the HDOH website at [health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019).

You can also call Aloha United Way at **211** from anywhere in Hawaii for information and referral services.

