



**This is an official  
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) Alert**

**MESSAGE ID:** MSHAN-2020323-00435-ALT (Health Alert)  
**RECIPIENTS:** All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, and  
Healthcare Providers - Statewide  
**DATE:** Monday, March 23, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Mississippi Health Alert-COVID-19 Priority  
Testing at Mississippi Public Health  
Laboratory and Guidance for Community  
Based Testing Clinics, March 23, 2020

**Priority COVID-19 Testing at the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory**

Testing for COVID-19 in Mississippi is currently available through the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) Public Health Laboratory and through commercial labs (i.e., LabCorp, Quest and AEL). Other testing partners may be available soon.

Due to the growing demand for testing and the broader availability of testing at commercial laboratories, the MSDH will be prioritizing the following groups for testing at the Public Health Laboratory, effective immediately.

**Covid-19 Testing priorities at the Mississippi Public Laboratory**

Symptomatic individuals with fever  $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$  F and acute respiratory illness who meet the following criteria:

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| <b>1) Hospitalized and long-term care patients with symptoms of COVID-19.</b> |
| <b>2) Outbreak and healthcare associated cases.</b>                           |
| <b>3) Healthcare workers with symptoms of COVID-19.</b>                       |

MSDH has a goal of <24 hours from receipt in the lab for all submissions from hospitalized patients. For specimens requiring rapid turn-around – direct drop off to the State Public Health Lab is recommended. Please designate the priority for testing on the Laboratory Requisition Form ([https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/resources/8500.pdf](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/8500.pdf)) when submitting to the PHL to ensure the tests are performed as priority (i.e., hospitalized, outbreak, long-term care resident).

**All other outpatient testing should now be directed to private commercial labs, or other partners as they come online.** Samples submitted to MSDH from outpatient settings will be performed as quickly as possible, but delays in reporting are likely.



## **Community Based Testing Sites Guidance**

MSDH encourages our clinical partners to develop fast-track or drive-through, community-based COVID-19 testing locations. In general, the priority patients for COVID-19 testing are those with fever ( $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$  F) and acute respiratory illness (e.g. cough, difficulty breathing) who meet the following criteria:

- 1) Symptomatic healthcare personnel or known contact to a suspected or confirmed case in the 14 days prior to symptom onset.
- 2) Symptomatic individuals at higher risk for poor outcomes (older adults and/or underlying chronic disease).

When screening individuals for testing, collect the following details upfront and provide to MSDH if the test is positive:

1. Complete demographic information including name, age, date of birth and accurate address and phone number.
2. Date of onset of symptoms.
3. Symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath).
4. Underlying chronic medical conditions, if known (e.g., chronic respiratory disease, heart disease, diabetes).
5. Healthcare worker, and if yes where do they work and last time they worked.
6. Where they are employed if not a healthcare worker.
7. Known contact to a case in the 14 days prior to onset.
8. Known travel (including US travel) in the 14 days prior to onset.

**If you identify a positive COVID-19 case, please fax to 601-576-7497 (fax information on COVID-19 positive cases only). This information will be required for epidemiologic investigations of confirmed cases of COVID-19.**

**Please note – many cases of COVID-19 may have mild or minimal symptoms. It is extremely important for all patients with respiratory tract symptoms to exercise caution, stay home from work and practice strict social distancing. The majority of transmission in the community likely occurs through individuals who are not tested and diagnosed with COVID-19. It is therefore extremely important that we all follow social distancing guidelines.**

Additional guidance

1. Provide symptomatic and/or positive patients with guidance on home care (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/caring-for-yourself-at-home.html>)



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2. Provide guidance for symptoms to watch for that indicate need for more urgent care and set up a plan and mechanism (i.e., an afterhours phone number) for the positive patient to consult with your facility for evaluation or referral for further evaluation as necessary.
3. Provide a physician name or number on the test requisition form (even if not submitted to the Public Health Laboratory) who assumes responsibility for the patient's care. MSDH will reach out to that individual when a positive COVID-19 is reported to provide guidance and begin the investigation. You may also contact the Office of Epidemiology with the point of contact for community-based testing events to facilitate communication.
4. Provide guidance to the patient for discontinuation of home isolation (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>). MSDH will also provide this guidance to COVID-19 positive patients.

Please call the MSDH Office of Epidemiology with questions at 601-576-7725 (601-576-7400 after hours, weekends and holidays).

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD  
State Epidemiologist



***Alerting Message Specification Settings***

<b>Originating Agency:</b>	Mississippi State Department of Health
<b>Alerting Program:</b>	MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)
<b>Message Identifier:</b>	MSHAN-2020323-00435-ALT
<b>Program (HAN) Type:</b>	Health Alert
<b>Status (Type):</b>	Actual ( )
<b>Message Type:</b>	Alert
<b>Reference:</b>	MSHAN-00435
<b>Severity:</b>	Unknown
<b>Acknowledgement:</b>	No
<b>Sensitive:</b>	Not Sensitive
<b>Message Expiration:</b>	Undetermined
<b>Urgency:</b>	Undetermined
<b>Delivery Time:</b>	600 minutes

**Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings**

<b>Originating Agency:</b>	A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.
<b>Alerting Program:</b>	The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.
<b>Message Identifier:</b>	A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT ( <b>ALT=Health Alert</b> , <b>ADV=Health Advisory</b> , <b>UPD=Health Update</b> , <b>MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service</b> )).
<b>Program (HAN) Type:</b>	Categories of Health Alert Messages.
<b>Health Alert:</b>	Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
<b>Health Advisory:</b>	Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
<b>Health Update:</b>	Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
<b>Health Info Service:</b>	Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.
<b>Status (Type):</b>	
Actual:	Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise:	Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test:	Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded



**Message Type:**

Alert:	Indicates an original Alert
Update:	Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
Cancel:	Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
Error:	Indicates prior alert has been retracted

**Reference:** For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

**Severity:**

Extreme:	Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe:	Significant threat to life or property
Moderate:	Possible threat to life or property
Minor:	Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown:	Unknown threat to life or property

**Acknowledgement:** Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

**Sensitive:**

Sensitive:	Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive:	Indicates non-sensitive content

**Message Expiration:** Undetermined.

**Urgency:** Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

**Delivery Time:** Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).