



Department of Public Health

MAYOR

Dee Margo

HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE

DATE: 3/31/2020

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Cassandra Hernandez

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Dr. Sam Morgan

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Tommy Gonzalez

Updated Criteria for the COVID-19 Specimen Collection Drive-thru Site

Background

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying and uncontrolled medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

This advisory is posted on the City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) website found at www.epstrong.org.

REASON FOR THIS ADVISORY:

On March 23, 2020 the City of El Paso received specimen collection assets from the federal government to conduct targeted community testing. Criteria has been updated for the following qualified individuals:

1. First Responders and Health Care Workers with symptoms¹
2. Persons 65 y/o or older with symptoms¹
3. Persons any age, with symptoms¹ **and** underlying medical conditions²

Qualifying individuals must not take any fever reducing medications prior to the appointment. A physician's order or insurance is **not** required. If testing criteria is not met, the appointment and/or specimen collection at the site will be denied.

Robert Resendes – Public Health Director

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Additionally, other persons evaluated by a medical provider and receive a Quest laboratory order for COVID-19 testing can be processed at the drive-thru collection site. Physicians need to provide health plan, Medicaid or Medicare information on the Quest requisition along with the appropriate ICD10 code. The test code is **39444 SARS Coronavirus with COV-2, RNA**. For these cases, locally acquired specimen collection kits will be used instead of the federal collection assets.

Government payors are covering the cost of the test. Health plans are waving copays and deductibles. A picture ID or any other form of identification is required to confirm appointment. Citizenship or immigration status is not being asked for. The patient's privacy will be maintained.

Ordering medical providers or qualified individuals can make an appointment at **(915) 212-0783 (NEW NUMBER)** during operational hours of **Monday thru Saturday from 7am – 5pm**. Location of the collection specimen drive-thru site will be provided when the appointment is made. Instructions will be provided for those awaiting their results.

1. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
2. Underlying medical condition that may predispose to severe disease include:
 - a. People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - b. People who have serious heart disease with or without complications
 - c. People who are immunocompromised including: congenital and acquired immunodeficiencies and individuals who take immunosuppressive medications (under chemotherapy for cancer or autoimmune disease, etc.)*
 - d. People with certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if uncontrolled, such as those with diabetes, moderate to severe chronic kidney disease, or liver disease
 - e. People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index [(BM)]I)≥40)

Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications. ([Source CDC: Information for Healthcare Professionals: COVID-19 and Underlying Conditions](#))

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