

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services HEALTH ALERT NETWORK



Advisory

TO: Primary care, infectious disease, pharmacies, laboratories, infection control, and

public health

FROM Gary Anthone, MD Matthew Donahue, MD

Director/CMO of Public Health Acting State Epidemiologist PHONE: 402-471-2937 PHONE: 402-471-8566

RE: TEST NEBRASKA ENDING

DATE: <u>June 28, 2021</u>

Over the past year, testing for SARS-CoV-2 in Nebraska has expanded from 300 tests per day to 25,000 tests per day, which was accomplished through a variety of test sites, including hospitals, primary care providers, pharmacies, mass testing sites and others. Currently fewer than 200 specimens per day are being collected and tested through Test Nebraska. With the expansion of testing availability throughout the state and declining Test Nebraska volumes, after July 18th, 2021, Test Nebraska will no longer be collecting COVID-19 specimens. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 will remain available through other routes, including national laboratories (e.g., Labcorp, Quest), affiliated laboratories (e.g., CHI Health Laboratory, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Bryan Health), rapid onsite testing and through the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL).

Please note that COVID-19 is still a required reportable condition and needs to be reported immediately. (Rev. Stat. §§71-501 and 71-502)

For healthcare providers seeing inpatients or outpatients with concern for COVID-19, testing is still highly encouraged as we continue monitoring and tracking associations between variants of concern, reinfections, vaccine breakthroughs and outcomes. As another respiratory season approaches, co-testing for both influenza and COVID-19 might prove increasingly valuable. Healthcare providers should utilize established testing routes and are asked to send specimens to NPHL under specific circumstances listed below.

NPHL Testing Availability

Testing for SARS-CoV-2 will remain available to local health departments and healthcare providers through NPHL. NPHL has the capacity to perform up to 1,000 PCR tests per day, is providing influenza co-testing and genomic sequencing, and is playing a critical role in assisting local and state public health departments track variants of concern, reinfections and vaccine breakthroughs.

ALL specimens sent to NPHL for SARS-CoV-2 testing are simultaneously tested for influenza A, influenza B and SARS-CoV-2. Test results for influenza A, influenza B and SARS-CoV-2 will be sent back to the provider. Sequencing results, if successful, will be sent to the appropriate local and state public health departments. DHHS is specifically requesting SARS-CoV-2 testing be ordered and sent to NPHL under the following circumstances:

- All patients hospitalized with COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19
- Potential vaccine breakthroughs (i.e., COVID-19 infection ≥14 after a completed series)

- Potential reinfections
- Patient presenting from areas or clusters experiencing rapid transmission, elevated attack rates or elevated percent positivity
- Returning travelers from out-of-state who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, or patients who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and have been in contact with recently returned travelers
- Confirmatory testing of presumptive positive or presumptive negative results from SARS-CoV-2 antigen tests
- Local health department requested tests

In each of these instances, if a specimen tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 and meets cycle threshold criteria for sequencing, it will be automatically sequenced. Providers are encouraged to work with their local laboratories and local health departments to streamline test ordering through NPHL. This testing through NPHL continues to be paid for by CDC grants.

Instructions to order testing at NPHL for SARS-CoV-2, influenza A, and influenza B

- Use NUlirt (NPHL's Internet-based, electronic lab information system) to complete an order for NCOVFL COVID-19 and Influenza A/B multiplex RTPCR assay. To access NUlirt, click here (https://nulirt.nebraskamed.com) using your existing NUlirt account. If you are a new user, follow the link to register and create a new account. Please complete all of the requested data fields included with the Ask On Entry (AOE) questions. A properly completed requisition is required for order processing. For orders created electronically, submitters should print a completed batch list to accompany the specimen by clicking within the NUlirt system. For issues related to NUlirt access, contact the NUlirt support group via email nulirtsupport@nebraskamed.com or contact client service representatives at 402-559-2440; or toll free: 1-866-290-1406.
- Specimen Collection Requirements (NPHL only): One nasopharyngeal swab should be placed in a single tube of transport medium provided by NPHL. See Collecting and Handling COVID-19 Laboratory Specimens, http://www.nphl.org/. To order specimen collection kits, please complete this survey: https://redcap.link/yiro9omf