



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

April 15, 2020

**MEDICAL ADVISORY: UPDATE #10—CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**

Dear Healthcare Provider:

The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) is providing the following COVID-19 updates:

**TESTING:**

When reviewing results of COVID-19 testing, keep in mind negative results do not preclude COVID-19 infection and should NOT be used as the sole basis for patient management decisions. False negative results may occur if a specimen is improperly collected (e.g., related to method or timing relative to exposure), transported, or handled. False negative results may also occur if an inadequate number of organisms are present in the specimen. Positive and negative predictive values are also highly dependent on prevalence of disease.

Please notify infection control personnel (as appropriate) and HDOH's Disease Outbreak Control Division (DOCD) immediately if:

- You have received positive COVID-19 test results for a patient tested at a clinical laboratory
- You suspect a cluster of acute respiratory illness, especially in a congregate setting.

Notification for these scenarios should occur regardless of whether testing is requested from HDOH or clinical laboratories. Per the Hawaii Administrative Rules Chapter 11-156, COVID-19 is considered an URGENTLY REPORTABLE condition.

**SEROLOGICAL TESTS FOR COVID-19**

As mentioned in a previous Advisory,<sup>1</sup> multiple serological tests for COVID-19 are currently available. Although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a policy allowing developers to market these tests once certain conditions had been met, these serological tests have not been reviewed or authorized by the FDA.

Early in an infection, antibodies may not be detected, limiting the usefulness of serological tests in diagnosing acute COVID-19. Additionally, the antibody level conferring immunity to COVID-19 has not yet been determined, limiting the effectiveness of these tests in defining protection against disease.

In the future, once additional data are available, validated serological tests may play an important role in, for example, understanding disease burden and scope in our population or identifying persons who can donate convalescent serum for possible treatment of the seriously ill. Until

<sup>1</sup> [https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2020/04/MEDICAL-ADV-UPDATE-8-COVID-19\\_04012020.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2020/04/MEDICAL-ADV-UPDATE-8-COVID-19_04012020.pdf)

**\*\* This message contains privileged communication between the Department of Health and clinicians and should not be shared with or forwarded to those not included among the original recipients. \*\***

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then, serological tests should NOT be used for management of patients (e.g., for acute diagnosis of COVID-19, release of persons from quarantine, or return-to-work clearance), as an unreliable test result may lead to further spread of disease in our communities.

### LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:

Given their congregate nature and residents served (e.g., older adults with underlying chronic medical conditions), long-term care facilities (LTCFs), nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), and assisted living facilities are at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19. If infected with SARS-CoV-2, residents of these facilities are at increased risk of serious illness.

All transfers of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients who remain under Transmission-Based Precautions<sup>2</sup> from acute care facilities to nursing homes and other long-term care facilities should only occur when:

- Patients are medically stable.
- Discharge planners have provided advance notice to the receiving facility regarding positive COVID-19 test results and the anticipated need for isolation precautions.
- LTCF has demonstrated the ability to adhere to infection prevention and control recommendations for the care of COVID-19 patients.<sup>2</sup>

Further guidance for acute care facility transfers to LTCFs and nursing homes may be found at [https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/files/2020/04/Healthcare\\_Facility\\_Transfers\\_COVID-19\\_Pandemic.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/files/2020/04/Healthcare_Facility_Transfers_COVID-19_Pandemic.pdf). For information for LTCFs and nursing homes, including a COVID-19 Preparedness Checklist, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>.

### DISCHARGE FROM ACUTE CARE FACILITY OF COVID-19 PATIENT STILL ON TRANSMISSION-BASED PRECAUTIONS<sup>2</sup>:

Patients who have clinically recovered and are able to be discharged from the hospital but who have not been cleared from their Transmission-Based Precautions may continue isolation at their place of residence until cleared. The decision to send the patient home should be made in consultation with the patient's clinical care team and HDOH (call applicable number listed below and ask for the investigator assigned to the case). Determination should include considerations of the home's suitability for and patient's ability to adhere to home isolation recommendations (e.g., high-risk close contact at home, separate bedroom/bathroom, etc.). Please note, hospitalized patients may have longer periods of SARS-CoV-2 RNA detection compared with patients with mild or moderate disease and may be contagious for longer than others.<sup>3</sup>

**This is a rapidly evolving situation.** To ensure you are accessing the latest information, please visit HDOH's COVID-19 webpage at: <https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/> or CDC's COVID-19 website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html>

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If you have any questions or need to report a patient with suspected/confirmed COVID-19, please contact us at one of the numbers below.

- 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)

We appreciate your continued assistance in protecting our community.

Sincerely,



Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP  
State Epidemiologist

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