



Date: March 13, 2020

To: San Joaquin County Medical Community

From: Maggie Park, MD, Interim Health Officer

COVID-19 Health Advisory

This is to update the San Joaquin County medical community on what is happening with testing and diagnosis for the novel Coronavirus COVID-19, in addition to reporting requirements.

Laboratory Testing:

- Several large commercial laboratories are now providing testing for COVID-19. As testing through the public health laboratory system is limited you should first consider this avenue for testing patients. San Joaquin Public Health Laboratory will be primarily testing specimens from hospitalized patients.
- Recommendations for testing:
 1. Priorities for testing symptomatic people:
 - Hospitalized patients with symptoms compatible with COVID-19;
 - Symptomatic health care workers;
 - Symptomatic individuals such as, older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions and/or an immunocompromised state that put them at higher risk for poor outcomes (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, receiving immunosuppressive medications, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease);
 - Symptomatic person who within 14 days of symptom onset had close contact with a person having laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or had traveled from affected geographic areas (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>);
 2. People who are asymptomatic do not need testing.
 3. Only a nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen is now needed. If both a nasopharyngeal and an oropharyngeal swab (NP/OP swab) is done place both swabs into the same sterile tube containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media. Use **only** synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts.

4. Ensure staff collecting the specimens are wearing proper protective equipment (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>)
 5. Note that there are other more common coronavirus strains that may be positive on a respiratory viral panel laboratory test. These are not the strains that cause COVID-19.
- Mildly ill patients should be advised to stay home and contact their healthcare provider by phone for guidance about clinical management. Mildly ill patients do not necessarily need testing. They should be advised to stay home until at least 10 days since the start of symptoms **AND** 72 hours after their symptoms have resolved to ensure they are no longer infectious.

Reporting Patients with Positive COVID Tests

- **COVID-19 is required to be reported immediately to SJCPHS (*Health and Safety Code § 2500 – Novel Virus Infection with Pandemic Potential*).**
- It is essential that medical care providers report all patients with positive COVID-19 laboratory tests to SJCPHS so that Public Health can take steps to mitigate community spread.
- During normal business hours call SJCPHS at 209/468-3822. After hours call 209/ 468-6000 (this is for providers only).
- A copy of the patient's lab report and a completed Confidential Morbidity Report is to be faxed to SJCPHS at 209/468-8222. The CMR can be found at http://www.sjcphs.org/disease/disease_control_reporting.aspx.