PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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ALERT: Notification of COVID-19 Test Results to Patients

DATE:	4/6/2020
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	**ALERT: Notification of COVID-19 Test Results to Patients**
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a "Health Alert": conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL**; EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS**: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- Healthcare providers who are evaluating patients for COVID-19 should instruct the patient to isolate. Patients should be asked to develop a list of people who were in close contact (defined as being within 6 feet for a period of 10 minutes to 30 minutes or more depending upon the exposure) with them from the period 48 hours before symptom onset to the time at which the patient isolated.
- All persons diagnosed with COVID-19 should self-isolate until at least 7 days have passed since symptom onset, and symptoms are improving, including being afebrile, for 72 hours without antipyretics.
- These steps should be taken immediately. Do not wait for test results to come in.
- Close contacts of laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases should be instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days since exposure to the patient being evaluated for COVID-19.
- Healthcare providers should give the attached documents to any patient being evaluated for COVID-19.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is asking that clinicians provide the current guidance on isolation to patients being evaluated for COVID-19 to ensure that timely recommendations are provided to reduce spread of disease.

When ordering COVID-19 testing, make sure all fields in the submission form are completed. In-house or commercial (depending on the lab) testing may provide faster results than DOH testing. Please report any confirmed cases of SARS COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 through the DOH electronic disease surveillance system, PA-NEDSS.

Healthcare providers should give the attached documents to any patient being evaluated for COVID-19.

Instructions for Patients Waiting for COVID-19 Test Results

- Self-isolate at home
- Compose a list of close contacts. Currently, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more from the period 48 hours before symptom onset to the time at which the patient went into isolation.
- If the patient lives with others, self-isolate in a private room and use a private bathroom if possible
- Wear a mask when entering general living areas and interacting with others
- If the patient develops additional symptoms or if their symptoms get worse, notify the HCP

Instructions for Patients with Positive Test Results

- Self-isolate at home.
- Monitor symptoms.
- Notify close contacts (including your workplace) and ask that they self-quarantine. Currently, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more from the period 48 hours before symptom onset to the time at which the patient went into isolation. For patient encounters with HCPs during the infectious period, a close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for 2-3 minutes or more.
- Under the CDC's non-test-based release from isolation strategy, patients with COVID-19 should self-isolate until:
    - At least 7 days after symptom onset, AND;
    - Symptoms are improving, including being afebrile, for 72 hours without antipyretics.

Instructions for Close Contacts of Patients Diagnosed with COVID-19

- Data are limited to define close contacts. Currently, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for a period of 10 minutes to 30 minutes or more depending upon the exposure from the period 48 hours before symptom onset to the time at which the patient isolated.
- Close contacts of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 should be instructed by the patient to self-quarantine for 14 days from the last time of their last contact with the patient.
- If a close contact develops symptoms during those 14 days, they could be tested by a healthcare provider for COVID-19, or they may be advised to self-isolate at home.
- Close contacts who are healthcare providers (HCP) should be instructed to notify occupational health immediately for additional information.

COVID-19 Patients who are Healthcare Providers

- Patients diagnosed with COVID-19 who are HCP, including staff in long term care or other residential facilities, should contact their supervisor and occupational health to report their diagnosis, and isolate at home.
- HCP who are diagnosed with COVID-19 should be excluded from work until:
    - At least 7 days have passed since symptom onset, AND;
    - Symptoms are improving, including being afebrile, for 72 hours without antipyretics
- HCP should work with occupational health to determine an appropriate return to work strategy based on the current capacity and facility surge situation.
- After returning to work, HCP should:
    - Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer
    - Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset
    - Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in CDC's interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles)

- o Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen

Categories of Health Alert messages:
Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of April 6, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.