El Paso County, CO
Public Health

Prevent • Promote • Protect

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State and Local COVID-19 Testing Strategies

These are challenging times for all of us as we learn more about the rapidly evolving situation with COVID-19, and as we adapt to new routines of physical distancing and staying at home. We recognize the community's concern about access to testing in our state and our county, and want to provide regular updates on our state and local government's testing of COVID-19 in Colorado.

State of Colorado

Testing for COVID-19 continues to be a top priority for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The Colorado Unified Coordination Group (UCG) is currently supporting strategic, targeted community testing for health care workers and first responders, and CDPHE is working to get the supplies and capacity to move to broader public testing. Due to limited supplies of testing kits and personal protective equipment, testing needs to be focused on the people who are the most at-risk from this disease and the people in charge of caring for and keeping the rest of us safe.

There are two primary routes to testing in Colorado:

- Hospital staff, hospitalized patients, and vulnerable, symptomatic patients receiving care at health care facilities can get tested at those facilities
- Critical health care workers and first responders who have symptoms can get tested at community testing sites being run by local public health agencies in various communities

The state has distributed 4200 testing kits and PPE to local public health agencies in El Paso, Larimer and Mesa Counties. The CDPHE lab also sent 300 testing kits to the Ute Mountain Ute tribe. More testing kits will be provided to local public health agencies once those supplies are received from FEMA. The UCG is working to develop plans that local public health agencies can use to conduct their own community testing sites when testing kits are more readily available.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is meant for single-use and is recommended by the CDC to be used for COVID-19 testing. In order to preserve these important resources for critical health care needs, CDPHE has recommended that health care providers prioritize testing according to these tiers:

Tier 1

- Hospitalized patients
- Health care workers with symptoms

Tier 2

- Patients in long-term care facilities or other residential settings such as homeless shelters or correctional facilities with symptoms

April 8, 2020

- Patients over age 65 with symptoms
- [Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms](#)
- First responders with symptoms
- [Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms](#)
- People with symptoms who work with vulnerable populations or in group residential settings

Tier 3

- Other individuals with symptoms

El Paso County

On April 5, 2020, the FEMA-sponsored COVID-19 testing site that was providing testing for health care workers and first responders was expanded to provide testing for individuals over 65 years who have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath).

The site is open daily from **9 a.m. - 5 p.m.** The following people are encouraged to come get tested:

- Health care workers
- First responders
- Individuals who are over 65 years and are experiencing symptoms

See below for more details on testing:

- The site is located at **175 S. Union Blvd.** in the back parking lot
- Individuals only need to bring a picture ID and insurance information if they have it
- Qualified individuals will be tested, regardless of insurance status
- There is no cost for the testing, and no need to have a doctor's prescription to receive testing
- This is a drive-through site and you will not be getting out of your car
- Please do not bring pets or others in your vehicle that will not be getting tested

CDPHE and El Paso County Public Health urge the public to not wait for a test to self-isolate if they are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#). People who are not at high risk of severe illness may not need to be evaluated in person or tested for COVID-19. Not everyone with symptoms will be tested right away. Call your healthcare provider if your illness becomes more severe, especially if you are experiencing shortness of breath. You can use [telehealth or a nurseline](#) to get medical guidance.

If you have any symptoms -- even mild ones – you are urged to stay home and isolate yourself until:

- You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without the use of medicine) AND
- Other symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) have improved AND
- At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
- Anyone in your household you have had close contact with (within six feet for approximately 10 minutes) should [self-quarantine](#) for 14 days, even if you haven't been tested for COVID-19.
- If you have a medical emergency, call 911. If you have severe respiratory symptoms, especially shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, tell the 911 dispatcher about your symptoms. Do not wait for a COVID-19 test to call 911.