



Clinician Alert #14 ALL CLINICIANS

COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease)

IMPORTANT CHANGE TO THE TESTING CRITERIA

Testing in Metropolitan Perth is ONLY to be done at COVID clinics or on hospital inpatients that strictly meet the below guidelines for testing; GPs in Perth Metro area are NOT to test for COVID-19. Tests ordered by metropolitan GPs will not be processed.

In country areas testing can only be undertaken by hospitals, health centres and remote health clinics operated by the WA Country Health Service, Silver Chain, Aboriginal Medical Services or RFDS. ALL services are to strictly apply the below guidelines for testing.

Test for COVID-19 in patients with a clinically compatible illness who have **documented proof of travel** overseas in the last 14 days OR are a **known close contact** of a confirmed case

Testing is to be done using a SINGLE SWAB for both THROAT then NOSE SWABBING

Changes to testing criteria

Due to extreme pressure on the consumables required for testing both locally and nationally, WA Health has undertaken to prioritise testing to ensure that the suspect case definition is strictly applied.

Suspect cases for testing

Fever OR acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat) with or without fever,
AND

- *proven* international travel (e.g. boarding pass, flight booking) in the 14 days before the onset of illness, OR
- *proven* close contact in 14 days before illness onset (call local PHU to confirm) with a confirmed case of COVID-19, OR
- hospitalised patients (ICU/HDU) with severe bilateral pneumonia and no travel history OR
- any healthcare worker who is hospitalised with moderate or severe pneumonia, with or without international travel.

Patients who are tested for COVID-19 should be isolated until results are available.

Patients who do not meet the above testing criteria but are still felt by the clinician to meet the [suspect case definition](#) (i.e. unable to prove travel or casual contact only) should self-isolate until symptoms resolve.

DO NOT TEST asymptomatic patients and DO NOT undertake testing for 'clearance' or return to work purposes.

Testing

- SINGLE dry swabs for PCR testing: insert first to obtain oropharyngeal (throat) sample, then insert to obtain nasal sample from each nostril and place swab in transport medium.
- If flexible shafted swabs are available, an oropharyngeal sample then nasopharyngeal (both sides) sample is to be done on a single swab. If only rigid-shafted swabs are available, then replace the nasopharyngeal sampling with nasal sampling
- Lower respiratory tract samples for PCR testing can be done if obtainable.

Send samples to your pathology laboratory with an urgent request for 'SARS-CoV-2' with their travel or case contact history or whether they are a healthcare worker.

Reporting

Suspected COVID-19 is urgently notifiable to the Department of Health by completing the notification form either [ONLINE](#) or by printing out the [notification form](#). Notifying by phone is not necessary.

Regional GPs or hospitals that require advice on testing should contact their [local public health unit](#).

If patients have questions regarding COVID-19, please refer them to the [HealthyWA coronavirus website](#).

Dr Paul Armstrong, Director

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL DIRECTORATE