



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

John T. Jansen, Director
Department of Human Services

Jen Freiheit, Health Officer/Director
Division of Health Services
Job Center / Human Services Building
8600 Sheridan Road, Suite 600
Kenosha, WI 53143-6515
Phone (262) 605-6700
Fax: (262) 605-6715

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CONTACT: Liane Blanck
262-605-6713

State of Wisconsin provides guidance on COVID-19 testing criteria

KENOSHA — Due to a national shortage of COVID-19 laboratory testing materials, the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene and the Milwaukee Health Department Laboratory are limiting testing to the highest-priority patients and health care workers.

This guideline, announced by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services on Tuesday, comes as the Kenosha County Division of Health continues to urge all residents to take precautions to stay healthy and stop the spread of the virus.

Dr. Jen Freiheit, director of the Kenosha County Division of Health, said the state testing guidelines help to give some context to the many individuals who have contacted her office and local health care providers asking if they could be tested.

“Unfortunately, demand for test kits is still far higher than the supply that’s available,” Freiheit said. “The Kenosha County Division of Health is not equipped with test kits. Testing is in the hands of health care providers — and now the state has given them a clearer idea of how to prioritize testing.”

People who have questions about COVID-19 are encouraged to call 211 for more information, Freiheit said.

With the increased number of COVID-19 cases reported nationally and identified community spread in Wisconsin, health care providers are urged to prioritize testing for hospitalized patients for whom timely diagnosis of COVID-19 is critical.

Testing should be prioritized based on clinical criteria. Asymptomatic patients will not be tested, nor will people with mild upper respiratory symptoms who are not health care workers.

Although the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene and the Milwaukee Health Department laboratories have significantly increased their capacity for COVID-19 testing, the number of samples being received still exceeds daily capacity.

Both laboratories will be testing high-priority samples from hospitalized patients and health care workers seven days a week for the foreseeable future. Test requests that do not meet the criteria will be sent to other labs in the state and country for testing.

Testing is not recommended for those with mild illnesses for which they would not normally seek medical care. It is recommended that these individuals self-isolate at home until their symptoms improve.

Information for healthcare providers on testing guidance and an updated, required triage form are available on the state Department of Health Services' COVID-19 website, at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>.

Prevention tips:

Gov. Tony Evers has issued an emergency order prohibiting gatherings of 10 people or more to slow the spread of COVID-19.

People are urged to think about how they can decrease close contacts and crowded environments while the virus is spreading in the community. According to DHS, this includes avoiding public places and staying home as much as possible.

If you cannot avoid public spaces, practice social distancing by staying six feet away from other people.

People should follow simple steps to prevent illness and avoid exposure to this virus, including:

- Avoid social gatherings with people of all ages (including playdates and sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors in your home, and nonessential workers in your house)
- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Avoid touching your face
- Stay home when sick

Residents with only mild symptoms are urged to stay home; to distance themselves from others in the household, if possible, by staying in a separate bedroom and bathroom; and to contact their physician if symptoms worsen.

People with symptoms are asked not to go to an emergency room, but instead call ahead if they believe emergency care is necessary.

Froedtert South earlier this week established a drive-up testing site in the parking lot of its Pleasant Prairie Clinic, although an initial interview is required before a person can be set up for testing. Call 262-551-4200 for more information.

For additional information about COVID-19, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's disease information page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov> and

the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm>, and follow the Kenosha County Division of Health on Facebook at www.facebook.com/KenoshaCountyHealth.

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