

Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Standing Order for COVID-19 Lab Testing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
June 18, 2020

Q: What is the DHHS Standing Order for COVID-19 Lab Testing?

A: The Standing Order is a Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) physician's order that authorizes lab testing for COVID-19 to be performed without an assessment or direct order from a health care provider that may be used by an individual in Maine who has symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to others with COVID-19. The DHHS Standing Order complements but does not replace your relationship with your health care provider. It also does not require any health care provider or COVID-19 test collection site to provide you a test.

Q: Where can I get a copy of the Standing Order?

A: The Standing Order is available on the Maine CDC website:
https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/ME-DHHS_StandingOrder_COVID19testing_06-18-2020v2.pdf

Q: Why would I need to use the Standing Order?

A: The Standing Order serves a number of purposes. It allows for certain individuals over the age of one year to undergo COVID-19 testing without a direct order from a health care provider. It helps people who believe they have been exposed or have an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 and who do not have a primary health care provider, cannot discuss this exposure in a timely way with their health care provider, or are visiting Maine or coming back to Maine from another state, for example. Individuals continue to be encouraged to contact their health care provider to discuss their need for a COVID-19 test, especially if they have symptoms, to get an order for the test from their provider when indicated.

Q: Do I need to bring a copy of the Standing Order with me to a test collection site?

A: While not necessary, if you have access to a printer, please print out and bring a copy of the Standing Order with you to the test collection site. Doing so could speed up the intake and registration process.

Q: I'm not sick but I believe that I may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. I called my health care provider's office and they said they can't order a test for me. Can I get tested at a site operating under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. While it is always best to talk with your health care provider about your need for a COVID-19 test, you may get a test at a site operating under the Standing Order if you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and meet one of the testing criteria outlined in the Standing Order.

Q: I'm not sick and have not had symptoms or elevated exposure to COVID-19 but want to know if I have COVID-19. Can I use the Standing Order to get a COVID-19 lab test?

A: No. Only individuals who meet one of the criteria in the Standing Order, such as having symptoms of, contact with, and/or elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 qualify for testing using the Standing Order.

Q: I'm not sick, but I attended a public demonstration recently and was in a large crowd of people. Can I get tested at a site operating under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. The Standing Order includes testing for people who participated in large gatherings, including public demonstrations, because of the potential for exposure to COVID-19.

Q: Do the conditions outlined in the Standing Order and the known disparities in COVID-19 testing and treatment mean that any person of color in Maine would qualify for a COVID-19 test at sites operating under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. While a person's race does not, by itself, make an individual more susceptible to COVID-19, evidence suggests that many people of color are at an elevated risk of being exposed. Anyone who believes they could have COVID-19, or could have been exposed to COVID-19, may get a test using the DHHS Standing Order.

Q: Do I need to be a resident of Maine to use the Standing Order?

A: No. Individuals may use the Standing Order irrespective of their state of permanent residence so long as the specimen collection occurs within Maine.

Q: I live in Maine but I recently traveled to another state that has a high prevalence of COVID-19. Can I use the Standing Order to get a test when I return to Maine?

A: Yes. The Standing Order includes testing for people who have been in other states where the COVID-19 prevalence is higher than in Maine. Under an [Executive Order](#) and the [Keep Maine Healthy Plan](#), anyone who is arriving in Maine from states other than New Hampshire and Vermont may forgo the 14-day quarantine requirement if the individual has a negative test result from a specimen taken no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival in Maine. If the specimen is collected in Maine, the individual must quarantine while awaiting the result. Anyone arriving in Maine from New Hampshire or Vermont is exempt from the quarantine and testing requirements.

Q: I live in another state and want to come to Maine (e.g., for a vacation, to visit family, or for non-essential work). Can I use the Standing Order to get a test?

A: Yes. The Standing Order includes testing for people who have been in other states where the COVID-19 prevalence is higher than in Maine. Under an [Executive Order](#) and the [Keep Maine Healthy Plan](#), anyone who is arriving in Maine from states other than New Hampshire and Vermont may forgo the 14-day quarantine requirement if the individual has a negative test result from a specimen taken no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival in Maine. If the specimen is collected in Maine, the individual must quarantine while awaiting the result. Anyone arriving in Maine from New Hampshire or Vermont is exempt from the quarantine and testing requirements.

Q: I work at a hotel or grocery store where a large number of out-of-state residents come. Can I get a COVID-19 test under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. Anyone who believes they could have COVID-19, or could have been exposed to COVID-19, may get a test using the Standing Order.

Q: I work at a group home or long-term care facility where periodic staff testing is being implemented. Can I get a COVID-19 test under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. Under the Standing Order, DHHS is conducting a sentinel testing program for nursing facility staff given the elevated risk of spread of COVID-19 in congregate living facilities.

Q: What does "sentinel testing" mean under the Standing Order?

A: "Sentinel testing" refers to a statewide program organized by DHHS that offers voluntary testing to certain individuals, such as those who work in nursing facilities, in order to determine how much COVID-19 may be circulating in Maine at any time.

Q: Does the Standing Order cover different methods of collecting specimens for COVID-19 testing, such as specimens obtained using either nasopharyngeal or nasal swabbing?

A: Yes. The Standing Order may be used to cover any appropriate specimen site as outlined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (i.e., U.S. CDC Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for Persons with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (as referenced in the Standing Order)).

Q: Does the Standing Order cover specimens collected using self-swabbing by the individual being tested?

A: Yes. The Standing Order has been updated to cover specimens collected using medically supervised self-swabbing.

Q: Does the Standing Order include antibody testing?

A: No. The Maine DHHS Standing Order for COVID-19 testing covers only molecular testing for COVID-19 (e.g., PCR, isothermal). It does not include antibody testing.

Q: Where can I get a COVID-19 lab test using the Standing Order?

A: A number of test collection sites in Maine offer COVID-19 testing to individuals meeting the criteria in the Standing Order, even if the test collection site is not the individual's usual health care provider. It is always best to call a test collection site before going so that you can ask if you are eligible for testing under the Standing Order and to schedule an appointment, if required. The State of Maine is planning to contract with private organizations to establish new "Swab & Send" sites at a wide range of locations around the state starting in July. Those sites will use the Standing Order to collect COVID-19 specimens and send the specimen to the Maine CDC State lab for testing. The State is also working with existing test collection sites and providers that may be able to expand their capacity using the Standing Order.

Q. Can a test collection site decline to provide a COVID-19 test to an individual seeking one under the standing order?

Yes. Some test collection sites, such as hospitals, may limit their testing to certain individuals such as those who are patients or those who have symptoms or confirmed exposure to an individual with COVID-19.

Q: How will I get the results of my COVID-19 test if I use the Standing Order?

A: All facilities collecting specimens for COVID-19 testing are responsible for contacting individuals with the results of their lab test. The Maine CDC State lab will not provide individuals with their results directly.

Q: Can I send a sample to or get a sample collected at the Maine CDC State lab?

A: No. The State lab only conducts the test on samples taken from test collection sites that have established relationships with it.

Q: Will I need to pay for a COVID-19 lab test if I'm using the Standing Order?

A: Generally, for the duration of the national public health emergency, the Federal government requires all types of health insurance coverage to pay for COVID-19 testing with no out-of-pocket charges to individuals. The Maine Bureau of Insurance also clarified coverage of COVID-19 testing in a Bulletin (<https://www.maine.gov/pfr/insurance/legal/bulletins/pdf/451.pdf>). Individuals should confirm coverage with their health plan directly as well as ask about any payments that may be required at the test collection site. Additionally, the State of Maine will cover the full costs of specimen collection and lab testing for any COVID-19 lab test that is done at one of the State-contracted "Swab & Send" sites from July 1 through at least August 31, 2020.