

Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
COVID-19 Testing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
July 17, 2020

New information as of 7/17/2020 is highlighted

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/MEDHHS_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 [those that are exempted](#) 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.

Q: I live in another state and want to come to Maine (e.g., for a vacation, to visit family, or for nonessential 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 non-exempted states 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.

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. Does the DHHS Standing Order apply to employer-mandated "return-to-work" testing, or regular and ongoing workforce-wide testing?

A. No. Only employees who work in settings in which their risk of recent exposure to COVID-19 is elevated because of the duration and density of contact with potentially infected persons are eligible to be tested under the Standing Order. Some examples include workers with direct, daily contact with the public; those in health care professions; and migrant workers. These employees may seek testing under the Standing Order if they are concerned they may have been exposed to COVID-19 in their workplace.

Employers who wish to require testing as a condition of returning to work when exposure to COVID-19 is not confirmed or suspected, or who are seeking to establish ongoing, periodic testing of their workforce should work with health care providers to arrange for testing, and reach out to their insurance carrier to discuss options.

Q. Does the Standing Order apply to testing of people living in nursing facilities or group homes and the staff that work there?

A. Yes, in some cases. Given the increased risk of COVID-19 for people living and working in congregate settings, such testing would be covered under the Standing Order when possible exposure to COVID-19 is suspected, including in places where community transmission occurs. This would include facility-wide initial and follow-up testing in response to a confirmed case of COVID-19, as well as recommended screening of patients upon admission to the facility.

Periodic testing of nursing facility residents and staff when there is not a reason to suspect possible exposure to COVID-19 does not meet the criteria outlined in the Standing Order, unless it is conducted as part of a sentinel testing program directed by DHHS.

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

A: “Sentinel testing” refers to a statewide program organized by DHHS that offers testing to certain individuals 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. A list of sites offering testing under the Standing Order can be found at [Get-Tested-COVID19.org](https://www.get-tested-covid19.org). 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.

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. [Get-Tested-COVID19.org](https://www.get-tested-covid19.org) indicates the eligibility rules for sites in Maine.

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. A list of State-sponsored "Swab & Send" sites will be maintained at: <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/restartingmaine/keepmainehealthy/testing>

Q. Are "Swab & Send" sites only for people covered under the Standing Order?

A: Yes. State-sponsored "Swab & Send" sites were established to collect specimens from people who meet the criteria outlined in the Standing Order. People who do not fit the conditions of the Standing Order (e.g., people curious about whether they have COVID-19) are not guaranteed testing at these sites.

Q. How long will it take to get results from the "Swab & Send" sites?

A: All official "Swab & Send" sites operating under contract with the State of Maine send sample to the Maine state laboratory for testing. The Maine state laboratory is currently able to process samples and return results within 48 hours although this does not include the time it takes to send the sample to the lab or have the results returned to the individual.

Q. What is the difference between sites "operating consistent with the Standing Order" and state-sponsored "Swab & Send" sites?

A: State-sponsored "Swab & Send" sites have a contractual obligation to collect swabs from members of the public meeting the criteria outlined in the standing order, and to send them to the State lab for processing. Tests performed at these sites are available to the public free of charge through at least August 31, 2020

Sites operating "consistent with the Standing Order" have confirmed to DHHS that their policies would currently allow anyone meeting the criteria in the Standing Order to be tested at the site. These locations operate independent of DHHS, and individuals may need to pay for testing depending on the

policies of the testing site and their insurance plan. The timeline for receiving results will depend on the laboratory the testing site uses for processing.