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## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

**To:** Health Care Providers  
**From:** Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist  
**Subject:** **COVID-19 Updated U.S. CDC Guidance**  
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**Abstract:**

**Summary**

On March 10, 2020 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC) released the following new or revised guidance in response to concerns around national and local shortages in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies, particularly N95 respirators:

- **Infection Prevention and Control**
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**
- **Long-Term Care Facilities**

Other guidance issued includes

- **Guidance for Based Precautions and Disposition of Hospitalized Patients**
- **People at risk for serious illness from COVID-19.**

Maine CDC is also providing additional guidance to providers seeking COVID-19 testing at Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL):

- Providers no longer need to call Maine CDC for authorization prior to submitting a sample for testing
- Nasopharyngeal (NP) and throat (oropharyngeal) swabs no longer need to be sent in separate viral transport media. NP and OP swabs can be submitted in a single container of viral transport media

# COVID-19 Updated U.S. CDC Guidance

## Key updates

**Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>.

Key points include:

### 1. PPE recommendations:

- a. Based upon local and regional supplies, facemasks are an acceptable alternative when the supply chain of respirators cannot meet the demand. During this time, available respirators should be prioritized for procedures that are likely to generate respiratory aerosols, which would pose the highest exposure risk to healthcare personnel (HCP). When the supply chain has been restored, facilities should return to the use of respirators.
- b. Eye protection, gloves, and gowns continue to be recommended. If gown shortages are experienced, they should be for aerosol-generating procedures, care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated, and high-contact patient care activities that provide opportunities for transfer of pathogens to the hands and clothing of HCP. Additional guidance is given regarding how to extend the use of respirators, facemasks, and eye protection as well on PPE shortages.
- c. There is increased emphasis on the implementation of early source control measures such as putting a facemask on patients presenting with symptoms of respiratory infection.

### 2. Rooming:

- a. Airborne Infection Isolation Rooms (AIIRs) should be reserved for patients undergoing aerosol-generating procedures.
- b. Patients with known or suspected COVID-19 can be cared for in a single-person room with the door closed.
- c. Facilities could consider designating entire units with dedicated HCP to care for those with known or suspected COVID-19 which will also help facilitate the extended use of respirators, facemasks, and eye protection.

### 3. Additional consideration during times of wide spread community transmission: Additional language regarding this has been added under the minimizing exposure and visitor sections.

### 4. For non-acute care healthcare facility:

- a. **Please have a facility or healthcare system plan in place to address patient/resident assessment and specimen collection (if appropriate) for suspect or confirmed COVID-19 persons under investigation.**
  - i. **Emergency Departments should not be utilized for specimen collection unless the patient/resident medical condition warrants emergency care.**
- b. Please refer to the attached guidance document for infection control recommendations for healthcare settings for what your healthcare facility needs to do to keep your patients/residents/staff safe as Maine prepares for the likelihood of community transmission of COVID-19.

**Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for COVID-19 in the United States** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

Maine Emergency Medical Services:

- Maine EMS continues to release updated guidance in the form of Clinical Bulletin Updates that can be found on the Maine EMS website and have been emailed to Maine EMS providers. These guidance documents work to help operationalize the current guidance being issued by U.S. CDC. The final page of the guidance document is

designed to be a poster that can be posted for EMS clinicians in the back of EMS units, breakrooms, and EMS spaces within healthcare facilities.

- Maine EMS encourages all agencies to remain diligent in conserving N95 respirators and other COVID-19 response supplies for only those patients who present a considerable risk of being considered a PUI. Additional responders, not needed for patient care or movement, should remain at a safe distance not requiring PPE so that they will not unnecessarily use scarce PPE resources.
- Maine EMS is hosting weekly briefings on Thursday at noon to give an update to EMS agencies on response guidance. This meeting is only intended for licensed-EMS agencies and not for the public and/or media. If EMS agencies have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Maine EMS via email at [maine.ems@maine.gov](mailto:maine.ems@maine.gov).

## Reminders

- **Patient testing criteria.** The U.S. CDC testing criteria remains unchanged at this time. **Testing currently is only for patients who exhibit signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 illness.**
  - **Health care providers should remind all patients being tested for COVID-19 to remain isolated until test results are back and are negative.**
- **Guidance for returning travelers.** At this time U.S. CDC guidance for travelers returning from countries for which there is a Level 3 travel advisory (China, South Korea, Italy and Iran) is unchanged. Such travelers need to self-quarantine for 14 days from their return and monitor for symptoms.
- **Laboratory testing.**
  - Providers no longer need to call Maine CDC for authorization prior to submitting a sample to Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL). The Coronavirus submission form is required (<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/download-forms.htm>) and may be used for prioritization if it becomes necessary. Samples on asymptomatic individuals will not be tested at this time.
  - Nasopharyngeal (NP) and throat (oropharyngeal) swabs no longer need to be sent in separate viral transport media. Please collect both and NP and OP swabs and submit in a single container of viral transport media. Information sheets and guidance for specific tests can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/submitting-samples.shtml>
    - [If influenza or respiratory viral testing is requested at HETL please submit a second NP swab in its own viral transport media](#)
  - There is no cost for COVID-19 testing at HETL. There may be costs associated with collection and transport of samples that will not be covered by Maine CDC, and normal charges apply to the Respiratory Viral Panel when performed at HETL.

**Interim Additional Guidance for Infection Prevention and Control for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 in Nursing Homes** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

**Interim Guidance for Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Disposition of Hospitalized Patients with COVID-19** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html>

**People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

**For more information:**

- Maine CDC's COVID-19 website [www.maine.gov/dhhs/coronavirus](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/coronavirus) or by calling Maine CDC at **1-800-821-5821**.
- U.S. CDC's COVID-19 website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>