



**COLORADO**

**State Emergency  
Operations Center**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **State health department provides update on statewide COVID-19 testing strategy**

DENVER, March 30, 2020: Testing for COVID-19 continues to be a top priority for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The Colorado Unified Coordination Group (UCG) is currently supporting strategic, targeted community testing for health care workers and first responders, and are working to increase the state's testing capabilities.

There are two primary routes to testing in Colorado today:

1. Hospital staff, hospitalized patients, and vulnerable, symptomatic patients receiving care at health care facilities can get tested at those facilities.
2. Critical health care workers and first responders who have symptoms can get tested at community testing sites being run by local public health agencies in various communities.

“Right now, due to limited supplies of testing kits and personal protective equipment, testing needs to be focused on the people who are the most at-risk from this disease and the people in charge of caring for and keeping the rest of us safe. It’s important to protect the most critical element of the health care system. We are working hard to get the supplies and capacity to move to broader public testing, but until then our message remains the same: if you have only mild symptoms, self-isolate and don’t wait for a test,” said Scott Bookman, CDPHE COVID-19 Incident Commander.

The state has distributed 4200 testing kits and PPE to local public health agencies in El Paso, Larimer and Mesa Counties. The counties will use these supplies to test healthcare workers and first responders across their regions. The CDPHE lab also sent 300 testing kits to the Ute Mountain Ute tribe. More testing kits will be provided to local public health agencies once those supplies are received from FEMA.

Meanwhile, the UCG is working to develop plans that local public health agencies can use to conduct their own community testing sites when testing kits are more readily available.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is meant for single-use and is recommended by the CDC to be used for COVID-19 testing. In order to preserve these important resources for critical health care needs, CDPHE has recommended that health care providers prioritize testing according to these tiers:

### **TIER 1**

- Hospitalized patients

- Health care workers with symptoms

#### TIER 2

- Patients in long-term care facilities or other residential settings such as homeless shelters or correctional facilities with symptoms
- Patients over age 65 with symptoms
- Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms\*
- First responders with symptoms
- Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms\*\*
- People with symptoms who work with vulnerable populations or in group residential settings

#### TIER 3

- Other individuals with symptoms

CDPHE is urging the public to not wait for a test to self-isolate. People who are not at high risk of severe illness may not need to be evaluated in person or tested for COVID-19. Not everyone with symptoms will be tested right away. Call your healthcare provider if your illness becomes more severe, especially if you are experiencing shortness of breath. You can use telehealth or a nurseline to get medical guidance; find out more and access a list of telehealth and nurseline resources [here](https://covid19.colorado.gov/telehealth-and-nurselines)

If you have any symptoms -- even mild ones -- public health urges you to stay home and isolate yourself until:

- You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without the use of medicine) AND
- Other symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) have improved AND
- At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
- Anyone in your household you have had close contact with (within six feet for approximately 10 minutes) should [self-quarantine](#) for 14 days, even if you haven't been tested for COVID-19.
- If you have a medical emergency, call [911](#). If you have severe respiratory symptoms, especially shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, tell the 911 dispatcher about your symptoms. Do not wait for a COVID-19 test to call [911](#).

Continue to stay up to date by visiting [covid19.colorado.gov](https://covid19.colorado.gov).

*\*A list of people who are at higher risk of severe disease can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/people-at-higher-risk.html>; however, this list may not be complete.*

*\*\*Critical infrastructure workers are those working in these sectors (<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>) who have a unique role in their work that cannot easily be transferred to other workers.*

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