



## HEALTH ADVISORY: CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

March 19, 2020

**Summary:** Amarillo Public Health increased the COVID-19 Status Level to level ORANGE on March 18, 2020 with the notification of the first two positive cases of COVID-19 tests in the Amarillo area. With this shift to level ORANGE, remember to cancel all groups over 10, practice social distancing, consider limited travel, and enhance hygiene practices.

**Primary Care Providers:** To reduce burden on the emergency healthcare system, recommendations for primary care clinics to evaluate patients are below. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html> - for full recommendations

- Triage patients via phone. If necessary, schedule an appointment for the patient to be evaluated for respiratory infection (fever, cough, shortness of breath). A history of exposure to COVID-19, including travel history, should be included in triage protocol.
- Give the patient a **facemask** and place in an exam room, with the door closed, immediately upon arrival. Avoid having the patient in the waiting room.
- Consider limiting points of entry to the facility.
- Consider scheduling sick and well visits in different blocks of time.
- Healthcare providers (HCP) should use hand hygiene and PPE (N95, gloves, gown, eye protection) to examine patient. Limit number of HCP who see patient.
- Rule out other causes of infection: flu, strep, respiratory panel, other point of care testing available.
- If all point of care testing is negative, then COVID-19 testing may be appropriate.
  - Nasopharyngeal swab and/or a lower respiratory sample (sputum, tracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage) collected.
  - NP swabs must be collected only on synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts placed in viral transport media.
  - HCP should wear all PPE during specimen collection.
- If patient is tested for COVID-19, they should be isolated to home (unless hospitalized, then isolated in hospital) until test results return.
- Specimen can be requested from commercial labs (LabCorp, Quest, CPL) or the State LRN lab in Lubbock.
- COVID-19 is a reportable condition and requires immediate communication with Amarillo Public Health. All tests requested and resulted can be faxed to 806-378-6307.
- To request lab submission through the State, please contact Amarillo Public Health at 806-680-8989. Please note, this is only a provider phone number.
- A call center has been established for our community at 806-378-6300 Mon-Fri- 8-5 and our website [www.amarillopublichealth.org](http://www.amarillopublichealth.org)

When there are positive cases of COVID-19, Public Health staff will conduct a thorough contact investigation. They will work first with the provider who ordered the test. Which is why it is critical each provider report tests performed and test results received through commercial labs.

### Amarillo Public Health

Amarillo Area Public Health District  
1000 Martin Road, Amarillo, TX 79107  
(806) 378-6300  
[amarillopublichealth.org](http://amarillopublichealth.org)



**Dr. Milton's Note to Physicians:** Once again the only remedy to the spread of this pandemic is self-isolation and social distancing. As always, use clinical judgement to determine whether the patient requires any resource, including laboratory testing and in-patient evaluation. The ability to test is becoming more limited. Most patients do not require the use of these valuable resources and can be sent home to isolate safely. It is up to you, their provider, to make this determination.

**Governor's Call:** This morning, Governor Abbott released an Executive Order. Effective immediately and until further notice:

1. Every person in Texas shall avoid social gatherings of 10 or more people.
2. Restaurants may not offer dine-in options. Restaurants are ENCOURAGED to offer options such as drive through, carry out or delivery.
3. Gyms are to be closed.

**Prevention:**

- Wash your hands with soap and water on a regular basis.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue in the trash.
- Follow recommendations from the CDC for using a facemask.

**Guidance: CDC/DSHS**

- Home isolation guidance <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>
- Strategies to optimize PPE <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
- Health care professionals: <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/#healthprof>
- EMS Systems: <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/#ems>
- Community and school information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/preparing-individuals-communities.html>
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Questions or requests for additional information can be directed to Amarillo Public Health (806-378-6300) after hours emergencies (806-680-8980).