



HEALTH ADVISORY: CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

March 26, 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.

Case Count: As of Thursday, March 26, 2020 there is 1 case in Potter County and 3 cases in Randall County.

Testing: As of Thursday, March 26, 2020 the testing criteria to submit a specimen through the Texas Department of State Health Services LRN lab in Lubbock are below. Please call Amarillo Public Health at 806-680-8980 for test evaluation. Please note, this is phone number is reserved for physician evaluation.

To provide information about what’s happening with COVID-19 in Texas, public health laboratories will use the following criteria to prioritize testing. Some commercial laboratories have testing available for situations that don’t meet these criteria explicitly.

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever ¹ or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including health care workers ² , who has had close contact ³ with a laboratory-confirmed ⁴ COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) ⁵	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas ⁶ (see below) within 14 days of symptom onset OR An individual(s) with risk factors that put them at higher risk of poor outcomes ⁷
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization ⁵	AND	No source of exposure has been identified

¹ Fever may be subjective or confirmed.

² For healthcare personnel, testing may be considered if there has been exposure to a person with suspected COVID-19 without laboratory confirmation. Because of their often extensive and close contact with vulnerable patients in healthcare settings, even mild signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat) of COVID-19 should be evaluated among potentially



Commercial Testing: If a patient does not qualify for Texas DSHS testing, a specimen can be sent to a commercial lab for testing. LabCorp, Quest, and CPL are locally available commercial options.

Communication: Amarillo Public Health updated the COVID page on www.amarillopublichealth.org please visit website for more information. We know that communication needs to be two ways, so we invite you to join us on Basecamp, a mobile communication platform. If you wish to sign up for Basecamp, email mark.price@amarillo.gov . And don't worry, you won't find yourself part of a huge group text! Communication can be in a group or one-on-one.

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.
- A call center has been established for our community at 806-378-6300 Mon-Fri- 8-5 and our website www.amarillopublichealth.org

Positive Results: 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.

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 Executive Order: Governor Abbott released two Executive Orders March 19 and 22. 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.
4. Elective procedures should be postponed so that PPE can be preserved for response.

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).