

Please test or refer for testing **ALL** patients with fever (eg night sweats, chills), **loss of taste or smell** and/or **ANY** respiratory symptoms (even mild), including rhinorrhoea, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. Also test those with a history of symptoms in the last 7 days.

To assess whether patients **with these symptoms** are suspect cases, please ask the following screening questions:

- Are you a healthcare, aged care or residential care worker with direct patient contact?
- In the 14 days before illness onset:
 - Did you have close contact with a confirmed or probable case?
 - Did you travel internationally or interstate?
 - Were you a passenger or crew member on a cruise ship?

If the answer to *all* these questions are NO, they are not a suspect case. If symptomatic, please still test as part of the **enhanced testing strategy**. Use standard precautions for enhanced testing, including hand hygiene, gloves, mask and eye shield. A gown is not required.

If the answer to *any* of these questions is YES, they meet epidemiological criteria for a **suspect** case. **Please follow the guidelines below for how to manage a suspect case and ensure they are instructed to self-isolate until their test result is received.**

Other COVID-19 symptoms are fatigue, muscle/joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting. For patients with these symptoms but no fever/respiratory symptoms or loss of taste/smell, assess before testing/referring for testing.

How to manage a suspect, probable or confirmed case

If they are not physically present in your clinic, discuss options for accessing testing. Instruct the patient to isolate at home while waiting to be tested. Emphasise the importance of physical distancing, hand hygiene cough etiquette.

If they are physically present in your clinic

1. Provide a surgical mask for the patient to wear and **ensure they put it on correctly**. Instruct them to use alcohol-based hand rub and direct them to a single room. Minimise the number of staff in close contact with the patient.
2. Perform hand hygiene.
3. If clinical examination is required, don a surgical mask, gloves, disposable gown and eye protection as per the [Personal protective equipment for contact and droplet precautions](#)
4. Proceed with clinical examination.

If you collect the sample yourself

5. If specimen collection is the only procedure required (ie without clinical examination), the need for a gown/apron is based on risk assessment. A gown/apron is only need during specimen collection if close physical contact with a symptomatic suspect case or splash/spray of body substances is anticipated. Don gloves, surgical mask and eye protection (safety glasses or face shield).
6. Collect samples through oropharyngeal and bilateral deep nasal swabs. See [Public Health Laboratory Network Guidance on COVID-19 Swab Collection](#)
7. Remove PPE safely, step-by-step as outlined in [Personal protective equipment for contact and droplet precautions](#) Place used PPE in a biohazard container and perform hand hygiene.
8. Provide the fact sheet: 'I've been tested, what do I need to know?'
9. Provide a new facemask for the patient to wear when leaving your consultation room, to go straight home.

If you refer the patient for sample collection

5. Remove PPE safely, step-by-step as outlined in [Personal protective equipment for contact and droplet precautions](#) Place used PPE in a biohazard container and perform hand hygiene.
6. Prepare the referral form for testing and fax it to a **THS COVID-19 Testing Clinic or GP-Led Clinic**; alternatively the patient can make an appointment themselves.
7. Give the patient:
 - **the fact sheet 'I'm being tested for coronavirus, what do I need to know?' V5**
 - **the fact sheet 'How to use facemasks safely'**
 - **three unused, packaged surgical masks** for the patient to wear, to protect others:
 - one to wear when leaving your consultation room to go straight home for home quarantine
 - one to wear while travelling to the specimen collection centre for testing
 - one to wear when returning home after specimen collection.Package spare masks in a zip-lock bag (eg a specimen bag) to prevent contamination.
8. After the consultation, ensure contaminated and contacted surfaces are wiped with detergent then disinfectant by a person wearing PPE (contact and droplet precautions), including gown.

Note

- If you are moving from patient to patient, gloves must be removed and hand hygiene performed after each patient. Put new gloves on contaminated and contacted surfaces before the next patient.
- Safety glasses and face shields can be worn during consecutive patients' specimen collections in the same location. If it is labelled as reusable, the face shield can be cleaned with a detergent/disinfectant wipe in between uses.
- Take care not to touch your mask while it is on; if the front of the mask is touched, remove and discard it, perform hand hygiene and put on a new one.
- Remember [Five Moments for Hand Hygiene](#)

Test results

- Patients tested through a THS clinic will receive negative results by text message from the THS.
- Patients tested through GP-led clinics will receive negative test results from that Clinic.
- **For patients you test yourself, please notify them of negative test results as per normal processes.**
- Any patient who gets a **positive result** will be contacted by Public Health Services as a priority. Where GP information is provided by the patient, the GP will also be notified of the result.
- If the test result is negative, patients can cease self-isolation unless they need to be in quarantine because:
 - a. They are within 14 days of close contact with a confirmed case.
 - b. They have been instructed by Public Health Services to quarantine because of potential exposure.
 - c. They are within 14 days of arriving in Tasmania.

For testing in residential aged care facilities (RACF)

To arrange testing of a resident in a RACF, call the Sonic Healthcare (Hobart, Launceston, and North West Pathology) COVID-19 hotline on **1800 570 573** (operating from 8:00am – 6:00pm). After hours, initiate appropriate precautions and call the following morning.

The Sonic Healthcare RACF COVID-19 Collection Coordinator will arrange delivery of the required number of specimen collection kits to the RACF. The kits include detailed specimen collection instructions, swabs and specimen transport bags. (For facilities that are remote from the major centres – Hobart, Launceston and Burnie – a small number of specimen collection packs [2–3 depending on the size of the facility] will be provided to be on hand to facilitate urgent testing if required.)

Collect the specimen following instructions for specimen collection in suspected COVID-19 cases, including using appropriate PPE.

Complete the pathology form with a request for 'COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses'. Write on the form that the patient meets criteria for COVID-19 testing and include the treating GP's details.

The Sonic Healthcare RACF COVID-19 Collection Coordinator will arrange transport of specimens to the laboratory.

Further information can be found in the Tasmanian Aged Care

Toolkit https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/89773/Aged-care-toolkit-for-respiratory-illness-outbreaks-for-web.pdf

The results will be phoned to the referring doctor and RACF RN.

If the result is positive, Public Health Services will be in contact with further advice and a specialised COVID-19 sample collection team will be sent to the RACF to collect specimens from all residents and staff.

While waiting for test results, the resident should be considered a suspect case. Follow appropriate infection prevention and control measures as outlined in the national guidelines.

For testing in other residential care facilities

For testing in residential care facilities other than aged care, please follow site-specific protocols or call Public Health Services to discuss.

More information

For more information and forms, go to [Tasmanian HealthPathways](#) (username: connectingcare / password: health).