

# COVID-19 recommendations for participating providers

COVID-19 has forced everyone in health care to think differently about how we live our lives. I want to thank those of you on the front line responding to this pandemic for the care you provide, and express our sincerest appreciation for everything you are doing to advocate for your patients and our members.

We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak across the nation and in the communities we serve. As a result of these unprecedented circumstances, we have implemented a response plan to ensure that we are doing all we can to meet the health needs of our members while safeguarding our participating physicians, caregivers and employees.

As a participating provider, your support of our organization and the health care system’s response to the coronavirus is critical to our shared success in meeting the health care needs of the community. In response to many clinicians in some areas hardest hit by COVID-19, below we are sharing decision-making protocols based on the current situation. Should circumstances change, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention testing protocols may change as well.

## Who should be tested for COVID-19?

Clinical features	Risk factors	COVID-19 testing?
Asymptomatic	None	No.
Asymptomatic	Either of the following in the last 14 days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to affected areas<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Spent time at a skilled nursing facility</li> </ul>	No. Monitor for fever or respiratory symptoms and contact PCP if they develop.
Asymptomatic	Close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case <sup>2</sup> in the last 14 days.	No. Monitor for fever or respiratory symptoms and contact PCP if they develop.
Symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, new cough, new shortness of breath, myalgias, etc.) <b>And does NOT require hospitalization.</b>	None	Defer to clinical judgment.
Symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, new cough, new shortness of breath, myalgias, etc.)	Special populations*	Yes. <sup>3</sup>

Chart continued ►

## Who should be tested for COVID-19? (Continued)

Clinical features	Risk factors	COVID-19 testing?
Symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, new cough, new shortness of breath, myalgias, etc.)	Any of the following in the last 14 days before symptom onset: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to affected areas<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Spent time at a skilled nursing facility</li> </ul>	Yes. <sup>3</sup>
Symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, new cough, new shortness of breath, myalgias, etc.) <b>And DOES require hospitalization.</b>		Yes. <sup>3</sup>

If your practice offers virtual visits, we encourage you to consider utilizing those services as a first level of evaluation of coronavirus to protect you, your staff, and other patients. Please also know that we, along with all other Blue Plans, have waived prior authorizations and associated patient fees for COVID-19 testing. As this situation continues to evolve, please visit our Provider Resource Center for the most up-to-date information.

Thank you again for all that you do to support your patients and our members. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your **Provider Representative** or the **Provider Service Center** at **866-731-8080** if you have any questions.

*Deb*

Deborah L. Rice-Johnson, President, Highmark Inc.

\*Special Populations: Older adults (age ≥ 65 years), immunocompromised individuals (e.g., cancer, solid organ transplant, other immunosuppressive drugs, chronic lung disease, hemodialysis, advanced HIV), pregnant women, and people living homeless or in congregant facilities (such as dorms, fraternities, sororities, shelters, jail, prison, skilled nursing facilities, adult family homes).

<sup>1</sup> Travel to Affected Areas: please refer to list of affected locations on [CDC.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19) website; presently the list includes travelers from China, Iran, South Korea, Europe (Schengen Area), United Kingdom, and Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Close contact: Within ~6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

<sup>3</sup> Sample collection for COVID-19: Nasopharyngeal swabs often generate a strong cough reflex. Standard/Contact/Droplet precautions are recommended. Please collect samples from both nostrils, using the same swab. If DOH or physician requests additional specimens: collect oropharyngeal (OP) swab and place in same tube as NP swab; Bronch/BAL/Sputum should be placed into a sterile screw-top tube. Please strongly consider testing for influenza/RSV prior to testing for COVID-19 as other respiratory viruses are currently circulating.

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