

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Public Health (BPH), Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) is prioritizing testing for groups using the below criteria for COVID-19 testing. Patients who do not meet any of the below criteria for COVID-19 testing should be managed as clinically indicated, including the decision to proceed with testing at a clinical or commercial laboratory. COVID-19 testing is now available through a limited number of commercial laboratories and availability through hospital and reference labs will continue to grow.

Public health consultation should always be sought before submitting specimens to OLS. Specimen collection guidance and the Specimen submission form can be found at www.coronavirus.wv.gov. Results are disseminated by OLS directly to the submitter via the information provided by the ordering facility on the specimen collection form and provided to the local health department for case investigation and contact tracing if the result is positive. The anticipated processing time for state laboratory testing is 24-72 hours.

Testing by the West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services will be prioritized to support public health activities including outbreak investigation and contact tracing of laboratory confirmed cases. The public health laboratory should not be used to expedite testing that could otherwise be performed by a commercial laboratory or for mildly ill individuals. Exceptions to the criteria may be made when time sensitive situations arise that have broader public health or health implications.

Individuals currently prioritized for testing by the West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services include:

Patients involved in an illness cluster or in a congregate setting. All suspected and confirmed outbreaks are immediately reportable to the local health department.

OR

Close contacts of laboratory-confirmed cases.

Other priority groups that will be considered for testing in urgent situations to protect the health and safety of others include:

Individuals with fever and/or signs of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) who do not have another identified cause for their illness in any of the following groups:

1. Healthcare workers,
2. Patients in public safety occupations (law enforcement, firefighter, EMS, etc.),
3. Hospitalized patients, OR
4. Persons otherwise at highest risk of poor health outcomes (includes any of the following):
 - Persons over the age of 60
 - Persons with serious underlying medical conditions* or who are immunocompromised†
 - Pregnant women

Approval for COVID-19 testing through OLS can be obtained by calling the West Virginia Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at (304) 558-5358, extension 1.

*Underlying medical conditions include people with chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, and serious heart conditions. People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] >40) or certain medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as those with diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease may be at risk for severe illness.

†Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications.