

## 2020 Health Advisory #18: COVID-19 Test and Trace Operations Begin In New York City

- Free COVID-19 diagnostic testing available for all New Yorkers
- All New Yorkers should receive COVID-19 diagnostic testing whether or not they have symptoms or are at increased risk
- New Yorkers are encouraged to find a testing location near their homes
- Immigration status will not be asked and COVID-19 testing and care services are not a public benefit under the public charge rule

June 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The daily rates of new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths continue to decrease, and next week we are beginning the re-opening of New York City after more than two months of New York State PAUSE.

On June 1st, NYC officially started a new phase in the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency: the beginning of the Test & Trace Corp, a coordinated effort to contain transmission of COVID-19 in NYC.

[NYC Health Advisory #15](#) presented a recommended testing approach that prioritized certain NYC populations for SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA or antigen testing (diagnostic testing). **We now recommend that all New Yorkers receive COVID-19 diagnostic testing whether or not they have symptoms or are at increased risk.** Routine testing will be critical to stopping COVID-19 transmission, given the now significant evidence of asymptomatic transmission. New Yorkers seeking medical care for any reason should be offered COVID-19 diagnostic testing.

Repeat testing should be offered:

- If your patient has symptoms of COVID-19.
- If your patient or you are concerned by a possible exposure, including
  - Spending time in large crowds;
  - An exposure to someone with confirmed or possible COVID-19; or
  - Breaches in wearing a face covering or maintaining physical distancing.
- If your patient works in a residential congregate setting such as a nursing home or shelter.
- Prior to your patient visiting someone at highest risk for severe COVID-19 illness (people 65 years of age or older and people with serious underlying medical conditions that place them at increased risk):

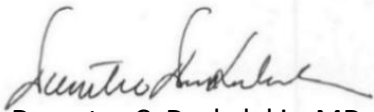
- Patients should get tested and, when possible, maintain strict physical distancing and other pandemic precautions for at least 10 days prior to their visit. Instruct your patients that if they have had COVID-19 symptoms within the last 14 days, no matter how minor, they should postpone their visit.

Repeat testing of someone who has had a prior positive diagnostic test for COVID-19 should be avoided unless clinically indicated or recommended by [public health guidance](#) given the persistence of non-transmissible virus well beyond the infectious period.

**The City of New York is offering free COVID-19 diagnostic testing to all NYC residents regardless of immigration status or insurance coverage.** Please inform patients who may have concerns that COVID-19 testing and care services are not a public benefit under the public charge rule. Locations where New Yorkers can be tested can be found at a NYC's [COVID-19 testing webpage](#) or by calling **311**. Encourage your patients to find a testing location near their homes and to share all test results with you to facilitate any indicated medical follow-up.

Please instruct patients with COVID-19 symptoms to stay home while awaiting their test result (except for essential medical care or essential needs like groceries), and to continue such measures if they test positive until the end of the isolation period.

Sincerely,



Demetre C. Daskalakis, MD, MPH  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Disease Control

**The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.**