

COVID-19 Community Testing

Role of Minnesota National Guard

Overall Public Health Objective

Increase access to “no barrier” COVID-19 testing across the state to find new positive cases as early as possible to prevent further spread of the virus.

Why?

- ✓ The data shows increasing numbers of positive cases in communities all over the state among people who don’t know how they contracted the virus.
- ✓ That means people who don’t know they have it are spreading the virus.
- ✓ This “community spread” puts those most vulnerable to the worst complications at grave risk.
- ✓ Testing helps people know if they have it so they are informed and can protect their friends, family, and neighbors who might experience serious complications if they contract COVID-19.

Role of National Guard

- ✓ Minnesotans in the National Guard are extraordinarily skilled at providing logistical and other services efficiently and effectively.
- ✓ Putting up temporary health care clinics in communities all over Minnesota to provide testing for people who want it is a significant undertaking.
- ✓ The men and women of the Guard will help deliver supplies, set up temporary testing clinics, ensure safe flow of traffic, and provide other services as needed for the communities being served.



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Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.

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FAQ

Does this testing follow CDC guidelines about testing of people who are asymptomatic?

Yes, the CDC guidelines direct anyone with known exposure to a confirmed case to get tested, regardless of whether they have symptoms. The guidelines also advise that state and local health officials may seek testing of asymptomatic individuals under certain circumstances to help control community spread. The CDC directs the public to follow the direction of state and local public health officials in those cases. Many who contract COVID-19 may experience mild or even no symptoms, but some suffer life-threatening complications. All who contract the virus are contagious. Testing large numbers of people in an area already experiencing community spread, isolating those who are positive, and quarantining their close contacts is a proven strategy for fighting spread of a virus like COVID-19. These community testing events also increase opportunities to get tested for communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 but that have had limited access to testing up to this point. The results provide important data about the degree of spread in a community to guide future efforts to combat COVID-19 and protect those who are most vulnerable to serious complications.

Our local teachers and schools have worked tirelessly to offer safe education options for our community. What impact will this testing have on our school learning model?

Increased access to testing and identifying positive cases as early as possible is a critical way to keep schools and the economy as open as possible. Helping someone find out they are positive early helps them protect others. But positive cases staying hidden leads to more spread and more detrimental impact to our schools and economy.

That said, once a learning model has been determined and school has started, broad community level data alone does not directly determine a potential change to the learning model. Instead, cases within the school community and what is happening in the schools themselves are the most important considerations.

Schools all over the state have done an immense amount of work developing safe and effective teaching strategies, no matter the learning model. Switching from one model to another is a complicated calculation that can be very disruptive and requires significant planning. School districts have to balance the important benefits of in person learning to the mental and emotional health of their students with the very real risk of COVID spread in a school environment. Any decision to change the model should be made by the school district in consultation with the local support team, including local public health, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the Minnesota Department of Education.

How are these communities being chosen?

We're coordinating with local public health and other officials, when possible, and responding to areas where the public health risk is greatest. We consider a number of factors to inform where the need is greatest:

- Increasing geographic balance of access to testing across Minnesota and focus on locations outside larger regional centers
- Prioritizing communities that have not recently hosted a community testing event
- Responding to communities with recent increases in positive cases

- Providing barrier-free testing opportunities for communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19

Is your goal to just test as many people as possible?

No. This isn't a mass testing effort and our goal isn't simply to go out and test as many people as possible. Our goal is to increase access to testing for people who need it and target testing opportunities in places that are seeing increased positivity or clusters of cases, and to places where people are in need of more access to testing. We know there are people who are more at risk, and this effort is about making sure the people who need testing have easy access to it.

What will this cost? Who is paying for it?

Testing events cost around \$62 per person tested. This cost factors in all costs associated with the testing, including supplies, staffing, lab work, and results delivery. The State of Minnesota is drawing on existing funds and federal funds secured through the CARES Act to pay for the testing.

If I get tested, do I need to completely isolate myself until I get the result?

Not necessarily. If you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a person who has been confirmed positive, please isolate until you receive your test results. But the fact of getting a test alone is not a reason to isolate. Here is the best guidance for whether to isolate pending test result, based on CDC guidelines:

- If you know you've had close contact with someone who tested positive – meaning you've been within 6 feet of them for more than 15 minutes – you should quarantine yourself until getting your test result.
- If you've been advised by your doctor to quarantine and be tested, you should follow your doctor's advice.
- If you've been specifically recommended for testing by local public health, you should follow that advice and quarantine pending the result.
- However, if you are not symptomatic, have not had close contact with a person who tested positive, and have not been specifically recommended for testing, you can still get tested. An individual deciding to get a test at a community testing event under these circumstances does not need to quarantine until they receive their result. All should still follow best practices to prevent spread:
 - Wear a mask
 - Social distance
 - Wash your hand thoroughly.



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