



Testing system bulletin

31 July 2020 #2

Visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

COVID-19 hotline 1800 675 398

Overview of the COVID-19 testing system

Overview

The COVID-19 testing system has been developed progressively since the start of the pandemic, and has grown and evolved significantly during that period.

The system includes a range of providers and testing models, and every testing site and model plays an important role. Currently there are over 160 places people can get tested for COVID-19 across Victoria.

The Department appreciates the work all providers have done to increase access, develop and implement innovative testing models and respond to changing demand and priorities.

This bulletin will be published weekly and made available to the entire testing system to ensure that you have consistent and accurate information about COVID-19 testing and the Department's instructions and priorities.

From time to time we may publish this bulletin more frequently if new and time critical information becomes available. We may also publish localised versions, containing information relevant only for particular locations.

We welcome your feedback on the bulletin and encourage you to let us know if there are particular issues or questions you would like us to address. Please email covidtesting@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Current Advice Regarding Asymptomatic Testing

The following table provides the current list of cohorts eligible for asymptomatic testing i.e. people who do not meet the current testing criteria (see Appendix A).

Eligibility for asymptomatic testing does change from time to time. This table will be updated weekly going forward. You can also find up to date information on the website www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/taking-test-covid-19#who-should-get-tested

Cohort eligible for asymptomatic testing	Verification
Individuals identified as close contacts of a positive case, or associated with an outbreak in a high risk setting	DHHS letter or text message. These people must isolate at home for 14 days from their exposure.
Pre-operative testing for all elective surgery patients	An authorised letter from health service (see Appendix B). These people should be advised to self-isolate until their admission to hospital.
Individuals living in high-rise social housing and other high risk residential settings currently being provided with on-site testing via Operation Benessere.	At the discretion of on-site testing providers.

The following people are **not** currently eligible for asymptomatic testing:

- People living in previously identified 'hotspot suburbs' (see appendix C).
- People with letters from their employer, school or community group advising them to get tested.
- Freight industry workers (see next page).

Note - in exceptional circumstances, and where is it deemed to be in the interests of the person's mental and physical welfare or the safety of the testing site, clinical discretion can be applied to allow testing to occur.

Current Testing Advice and Information – Freight industry workers

- We are aware that a number of truck drivers and other freight industry workers have been presenting at testing sites advising that they require a test due to a new National Freight Protocol. This Protocol and its implementation is still being worked through by the Commonwealth, States and Territories.
- Victoria's policy remains unchanged and we do not currently support asymptomatic testing. The current position regarding who should be tested will always be current per our website: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/taking-test-covid-19#who-should-get-tested
- Victoria's Department of Transport has issued a bulletin to industry to advise industry and employers that tests are not available for their workers (unless symptomatic or a confirmed close contact), including the following points:
 - National Cabinet considered and agreed a Domestic Border Control Freight Movement Protocol to allow freight to move safely and efficiently across borders to encourage greater national consistency in approaches to management of cross-border freight movements.
 - Until the Code takes effect, there is no change in Victorian protocols, which include no asymptomatic testing unless you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.
 - Freight workers crossing into New South Wales (NSW) or South Australian (SA) will need to review their current requirements. NSW freight and logistics requirements at www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/industry-guidelines/transport-freight-and-logistics-operations. SA freight and logistics requirements at www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/restrictions-and-responsibilities/travel-restrictions
- We will provide a further update once the details of the Code and its implementation is confirmed

Current Testing Advice and Information - General

- Further to advice last week to cease collecting ‘hot spot’ suburb or post code information, there is no current requirement to report postcode level data to DHHS.
- The Department has been developing a tool to improve the way COVID-19 test data is collected and tracked. “Test Tracker” is almost ready to pilot, and we will be approaching a small number of sites over the coming weeks to pilot this tool. We hope that it will reduce the need for manual processes, and improve data quality. The pilot will be an opportunity to understand how Test Tracker can be incorporated into existing workflows and inform a change management strategy.
- We have received some feedback that members of the community continue to be confused about what they should do once they get tested. The instructions provided to members of the public should be as follows:
 - People who are symptomatic must isolate until they receive a negative test result. People should be encouraged to monitor symptoms and contact their GP for continued expert health advice and care.
 - People who have been formally identified (via a letter or phone call from DHHS) as close contacts of a positive case (including, for example, large groups associated with workplace outbreaks) must isolate at home for 14 days from their exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms and regardless of an initial negative test result.
 - In the unlikely case that you are testing people who are asymptomatic, and are not close contacts or pre-operative, these people do not have to isolate while they wait for test results.
 - Refer to the latest information at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested

Improving links with general practice

Context

- General Practitioners (GPs) play an essential role in supporting and managing the health of COVID-19 patients with mild and moderate symptoms in the community.
- Currently, GPs are not always aware that their patients have been tested, or that they have a positive result. This is in part because data about usual GP is not consistently being collected, and therefore GPs are not being notified of COVID-19 test results as would usually occur for other pathology results.

Action required to address this issue

All COVID-19 testing sites are required to review their current processes and workflows to include:

1. Asking each patient presenting for testing the name of their GP and/or GP practice name (if they have one) **and** the practice address or suburb.
2. Recording this information on the pathology form as a “copy to” so that pathology labs can send a copy of results to the nominated clinician or practice.
3. Recommending to all people presenting for testing that they contact their GP to let them know they have had a COVID-19 test and to seek continued expert health advice and care. Further information from the Royal Australian College of GPs at www.expertadvicematters.com.au

Positive results

- The **accountability** to advise patients of positive results **remains the responsibility of clinical lead at the testing site** as the requesting provider on the pathology request form.

Appendix A – Current testing criteria

People with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), however mild, should get tested. The symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- Fever
- Chills or sweats
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell or taste

In certain circumstances headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also be considered.

Appendix B - Introduction of pre-operative COVID-19 testing for all elective surgery patients

There has been an increasing number and spread of COVID-19 cases throughout June and July 2020, and the introduction of Stage 3 restrictions for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire from July 8 2020.

Pre-operative testing has been introduced for all elective surgery patients, within metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire (stage 3 restriction areas) in both public and private health services.

Following COVID-19 testing, patients should be advised to self-isolate until their admission to hospital.

Appendix C: Hotspot Suburb Testing

In late June 2020 six local government areas were publicly identified by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) as coronavirus 'hotspots' due to the level of community transmission. These LGAs were Hume, Casey, Brimbank, Moreland, Cardinia and Darebin. On June 25 DHHS released announced a COVID-19 Suburban Testing Blitz to manage these areas of concern across the following suburbs:

1. Keilor Downs
2. Maidstone
3. Albanvale
4. Sunshine West
5. Hallam
6. Broadmeadows
7. Brunswick West
8. Fawkner
9. Reservoir
10. Pakenham

From Thursday 9 July 2020 all of metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire returned to stage 3 home restrictions, per the Stay at Home Directions (Restricted Areas) signed into effect by the Deputy Chief Health Officer on 8 July 2020. These directions revoked previous directions relating to Stay at Home Directions (Restricted Postcodes).