

Clarification of COVID-19 Guidance pertaining to Testing and Disposition of Hospitalized Patients



Mission to Care. Vision to Lead.

MARCH 23, 2019

1. Who should be evaluated for COVID-19 infection AND tested before they are released to a post-acute care facility?

Individuals 65 or older or individuals with a severe underlying medical condition who have new onset lower respiratory track disease or pneumonia, either the inpatient or outpatient setting.

Please see http://fha.informz.net/FHA/data/images/AHCACommunication_32120.pdf

The following individuals should be tested for COVID-19 before they are released from a hospital:

1. Individuals 65 or older who have new onset lower respiratory track disease or pneumonia
2. Individuals with severe underlying medical conditions who have new onset lower respiratory track disease or pneumonia
3. Individuals 65 or older with a fever of 100.4 or higher *and* cough
4. Individuals with severe underlying medical conditions with a fever of 100.4 or higher *and* cough
5. Individuals 65 or older with a fever of 100.4 or higher *and* other respiratory symptoms including shortness of breath
6. Individuals with severe underlying medical conditions with a fever of 100.4 or higher *and* other respiratory symptoms including shortness of breath.
7. Individuals with travel to high risk travel areas, both international and domestic.

2. When can hospitals discontinue transmission-based isolation precautions of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19?

Per [CDC guidance](#), the decision to discontinue transmission-based isolation precautions for hospitalized patients with COVID-19 should consider disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for COVID-19 in respiratory specimens. Consideration of discontinuation of isolation should include:

- Resolution of fever, without use of antipyretic medication
- Improvement in illness signs and symptoms
- Negative COVID-test results from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal specimens collected at least 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens from two nasopharyngeal specimens). *CDC interim guidance, March 21, 2020*. However, if swabs are in short supply, CDC interim guidance dated March 21, 2020 is now recommending collecting only the nasopharyngeal swab. In this case, a total of two (2) negative nasopharyngeal swabs collected at least 24 hours apart.
- Please note - Individuals who have tested negative to COVID-19, but who were tested because they had high risk travel or COVID-19 positive person exposure in the prior 14 days, may require continued isolation or self-quarantine.

3. When can a patient be safely transferred to a post-acute care facility?

All hospitalized patients should be assessed for COVID-19 prior to transfer to a post-acute care facility. Patients who presented with illness described in the COVID-testing criteria listed above in #1 should be:

- Tested for COVID-19.
- COVID-19 test must be negative prior to transfer to a post-acute facility. See criteria listed in #2 above.
- In addition, in accordance with AHCA and FDOH guidance, patients should not be transferred to a post-acute care facility if they have fever and respiratory symptoms including cough and shortness of breath.

Hospitals should complete the [Hospital to Post-Acute Care Facility COVID 19 Transfer form](#) to document and communicate the patient's COVID-19 status prior to transfer.

4. Can patients who tested positive for COVID-19 be safely discharged to home?

Most patients can be safely discharged home from a healthcare facility when their clinical status has improved and they no longer required inpatient acute care. If the patient does not meet the criteria for discontinuation of transmission-based isolation precautions (see #2 above) there are additional assessments and communications required.

- Hospital discharge planning personnel should communicate with the local health department to facilitate a safe and appropriate discharge
- Assessment of the patient's home situation and environment must be provided. Are there members of the household who are elderly or individuals with serious underlying medical conditions?
- Will the home environment allow for spatial separation as recommended by CDC. Household members must stay in separate rooms and use a separate bedroom and bathroom. The patient should not care for pets or other animals until they are COVID-19 negative.
- The patient must wear a standard face mask when it is necessary to be around other people in the home.