

**Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE)**  
**Guidance for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing in Alaska**  
*February 2, 2023*

**Key Points**

- All facilities or organizations that administer or interpret COVID-19 testing must report laboratory-positive cases of COVID-19 to SOE preferentially via an electronic method. As able, facilities should integrate COVID reporting into their established route of reporting for other [conditions of public health importance](#). Detailed Alaska Reporting Guidance can be found [here](#).
- SOE staff can be reached for consultation at **907-269-8000** or **800-478-0084** (after-hours).
- The Alaska State Virology Laboratory in Fairbanks (ASVL) is running specimens 5 days per week (M–F, excluding holidays). Specimens must be submitted with a [Respiratory Pathogen Test Request form](#).
- The testing landscape of COVID-19 has evolved over the past 3 years with more readily available at-home testing and reduction of free community testing sites. With various respiratory pathogens circulating in addition to SARS-CoV-2, overarching principles for disease control include:
  - Symptomatic people should act to minimize transmission to others by isolating until after symptoms have improved, including isolating until they are at least fever free for >24 hours. [Guidance](#) on duration of isolation specifically for COVID-19 is available from CDC.
  - Testing can assist in confirming a diagnosis and ensuring that those with high-risk conditions can be connected to treatment.
  - Pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., vaccination and treatment) and non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., masks, social distancing, and improving ventilation) can reduce transmission and/or reduce severe outcomes from COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens.

**Testing Principles**

- An overview of testing for SARS-CoV-2 can be found [here](#).
- When multiple respiratory pathogens are co-circulating, consider testing for multiple pathogens on symptomatic people, especially if the person is at high risk of severe disease and may be eligible for [treatments](#).
- Decisions to test should not be based on vaccination status.
- Testing is recommended [after exposure](#) to SARS-CoV-2. Requirements or recommendations for routine screening may be present in some venues or local communities due to local/employer/business policy.
- CDC has guidance for [healthcare facilities including nursing homes, other congregate settings, schools, and travel](#).
- Alaska information for those who work or live at a seafood processing facility is available [here](#).
- Positive OTC tests that are self-collected and self-interpreted do not have to be reported to SOE. CDC information about at-home testing is available [here](#).

**Sequencing and Variant Detection**

- All positive specimens collected in UTM/VTM or any Hologic Aptima Direct Load tubes should be submitted to ASVL for sequencing. Re-collection is not necessary; submit the remainder of the specimen.
- Specimens that are not collected in UTM/VTM or Hologic Aptima Direct Load tubes cannot be sequenced (this includes most specimens tested on rapid antigen assays).
- Specimens sent within 2 weeks of collection are prioritized.
- Send positive specimens as Category B samples to ASVL in Fairbanks, per [shipping instructions](#).
- For more information about sequencing SARS-CoV-2 in Alaska, click [here](#).
- For the most recent Alaska SARS-CoV-2 genomics results, please visit the [genomics dashboard](#).

Please check the [DOH COVID-19 website](#) and [CDC's COVID-19 website](#) frequently for updates.