Guidance for the Identification of Persons with Suspected 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

General Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Louisiana Office of Public Health continue to closely monitor an outbreak of a 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, most of which cause mild respiratory infection. There are four coronaviruses that are currently circulating in the U.S.: 229E (alpha coronavirus), NL63 (alpha coronavirus), OC43 (beta coronavirus), and HKU1 (beta coronavirus). These coronaviruses are easily detectable through commercial respiratory virus testing. They are distinct from the 2019-nCoV, MERS and SARS. Patients testing positive for any of these endemic coronaviruses should be managed in the same way as patients with other respiratory infections.

Early Detection

Upon presentation to a healthcare facility, all patients with symptoms of lower respiratory infection and/or fever should be asked about recent travel or contact with a person under investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV.

If a symptomatic patient has a relevant travel history or has had close contact with a PUI within the previous 14 days, follow internal procedures to immediately notify the appropriate infection control personnel at your facility.

Healthcare facilities should then immediately notify the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section (IDEpi) of the Louisiana Department of Health by calling **1-800-256-2748**.

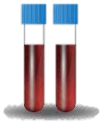
Infection Control Precautions

All PUIs should be asked to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified and be evaluated in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room if available. Healthcare personnel caring for a PUI should use Standard Precautions, Contact Precautions, Airborne Precautions, and use eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield). If a PUI provides advance notice of their visit, healthcare personnel should make every effort to provide them with a surgical mask before they enter the facility.

EPA-registered disinfectants or 1:100 dilution of household bleach and water should be used for low-level disinfection of surfaces and noncritical patient-care equipment.

Laboratory Testing

Testing for 2019-nCoV is only available at CDC. Respiratory diagnostic testing available through hospital and commercial laboratories does not detect novel coronaviruses. Testing of PUIs must be coordinated through Louisiana Office of Public Health IDEpi. Healthcare personnel should collect both lower and upper respiratory tract specimens as well as serum from any person suspected of being infected with the novel coronavirus. Specimens should be stored at 2-8°C until testing is approved by IDEpi.



Please note that other specimen types may be requested. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of symptom onset. **For biosafety reasons, it is not recommended to perform virus isolation in cell culture or initial characterization of viral agents in cell cultures of specimens from a PUI for 2019-nCoV.**

For Immediate Assistance – Contact IDEpi- 1-800-256-2748 – 24 hours