



COVID-19 Testing Considerations for Iowa Businesses

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The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) recognizes that many businesses might want to provide diagnostic or serology testing for COVID-19 for their employees. Testing can provide important information about an individual's health and about virus activity in a community. Diagnostic testing looks for current infection and assess a single point in time. It's possible that someone could test negative one day and positive the next. Serology testing can be used to look for antibodies in the blood suggesting someone was infected in the past, but we don't yet know how well those antibodies work to fight the virus and provide immunity. Businesses and individuals should continue to follow public health guidance to prevent COVID-19. Additional resources are shared by [IDPH](#) and [CDC](#).

Diagnostic COVID-19 Viral PCR Testing

Healthcare providers can order a test for any person they think needs one at clinical and commercial laboratories (clinical and commercial laboratories will charge fees for this testing). The State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) will provide COVID-19 PCR testing at no cost for the following situations:

COVID-19 Viral PCR Testing Criteria at SHL

- Hospitalized patient (of any age) with fever or respiratory illness for diagnosis or any hospitalized patient prior to discharge to a long term care facility or other nursing care facility.
- Older adult (> 60 years of age) with fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) and chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, immunosuppressive medications, chronic lung disease, or chronic kidney disease).
- Person of any age with fever or respiratory illness who lives in a congregate setting (i.e., long term care facilities, dormitories, residential facilities, correctional facilities, treatment facilities).
- Healthcare worker, essential services personnel, first responder or critical infrastructure worker with fever or respiratory illness (e.g., healthcare worker, fire, EMS, law enforcement, residential facility staff, food supply and water plant operators).
- Children receiving care in and staff working in childcare homes and childcare centers with fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) without alternative diagnosis.
Symptomatic and asymptomatic close contacts (defined as spending more than 15 minutes within 6 feet) of persons who test positive for COVID-19 infection using PCR viral testing (close contact testing should not occur until at least 48 hours after the earliest exposure to COVID-19 positive persons).

In addition, all Iowans can receive PCR testing for COVID-19 at no cost through [Test Iowa](#).

Serology (Antibody) Testing for COVID-19

Healthcare providers can order antibody testing at many clinical and commercial laboratories. In addition, SHL will perform COVID-19 serology testing at no cost for the following situations:

COVID-19 Serology (Antibody) Testing Criteria at SHL

- A patient suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 who is greater than 7 days post symptom onset.
- Identification of persons with an antibody response to serve as convalescent plasma donors.
- Healthcare worker, essential services personnel, first responder or critical infrastructure worker (e.g., healthcare worker, fire, EMS, law enforcement, food service worker and residential facility staff) for whom knowledge of antibody production is needed.

Iowa businesses wanting to perform PCR or serology testing, in accordance with the SHL testing criteria, should arrange testing for their staff through their occupational health provider and send specimens to [SHL](#) for testing.

Iowa businesses wanting to perform PCR or serology testing outside of the SHL testing criteria should arrange testing for their staff in coordination with their occupational health provider using a clinical or commercial laboratory. The cost of this testing is the responsibility of the business or the employee. Occupational health providers may identify a local clinical laboratory performing COVID-19 testing. Different test assays may have different collection methods and/or performance characteristics. A list of commercial laboratories performing COVID-19 testing is available [here](#) (scroll down to "Test Kit Manufacturers and Commercial Laboratories Table").