



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences  
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lieutenant Governor

Tel: (617) 983-6550  
Fax: (617) 983-6925  
[www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

MARYLOU SUDDERS  
Secretary  
MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH  
Commissioner

**TO:** Healthcare Providers, Healthcare Facilities, COVID-19 Testing Sites, Local Boards of Health and the Community Tracing Collaborative

**FROM:** Catherine M. Brown, DVM, MSc, MPH, State Epidemiologist  
Larry Madoff, MD, Medical Director, BIDLS

**DATE:** May 11, 2020

**RE:** Recommendation for Routine Molecular Testing of People Identified as Close Contacts to COVID-19 Cases

---

As the pandemic evolves, public health needs and priorities are evolving as well. The number of new cases seems to be slowly declining but as restrictions begin to loosen, it becomes increasingly critical that the healthcare and public health systems work together to identify every case. Rapid identification of cases and identification of their close contacts is a priority.

Close contacts of confirmed cases are the people most likely to become infected themselves. To facilitate identification of infections, molecular testing is recommended for all close contacts regardless of symptom status.

- **Close contacts, regardless of symptoms associated with COVID-19, should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19.**
- **Testing should be done by PCR or other molecular test from a nasopharyngeal, nasal, or oral swab or a sputum sample. Serologic (antibody) testing is not appropriate for this use.**
- Symptom-based testing should occur at any time during the contact's 14-day quarantine period, even if the person previously had a negative test result within that same period.
- There should be a low threshold for determining if someone is symptomatic and new onset of any of the following symptoms—fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, chills, shaking chills, headache, myalgia, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell—in a close contact should trigger testing.
- The contact is required to quarantine for the full 14 days, even following a negative test result.
- Close contacts may present a letter or a text from the MA COVID Team or a letter from a local Board of Health indicating the need for testing.
- Please refer to the website to find a convenient testing site <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-testing#testing-sites>

Your assistance in this public health measure to help reduce transmission of COVID-19 is appreciated. Questions can be directed to the Division of Epidemiology line, available 24/7, at 617-983-6800.