



## PCR ONLY DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

*Updated April 24, 2020*

### **FOLLOW-UP FOR NEGATIVE PCR TEST RESULTS**

Following COVID-19 PCR testing, the PCP should closely monitor patients for worsening of symptoms. Recommended conservative approach to follow up:

- **Two-day, post testing follow-up**
  - **Check on patient symptoms**
  - Re-enforce **14-day tracker use**
  - Re-enforce **home isolation compliance**
  - **Results** will likely be **pending**
  
- **Third or 4th-day, post testing follow-up**
  - **Discuss test results**
  - **Check** on patient **symptoms**
  - Re-enforce **14-day tracker use**
  - Re-enforce **home isolation compliance**
  - Re-enforce need to **call PCP with any worsening of symptoms**
  
- **Clearance virtual visit, post-symptom resolution or 14-day post-exposure follow-up**
  - For simplicity in guiding symptomatic patients for clearance from isolation, consider asking patient to **schedule** a virtual visit **follow-up no sooner than:**
    - 3 days after resolution of fever **AND** Improved respiratory symptom
    - For **asymptomatic patients** with a **known exposure**, patients should follow up no sooner than **14 days**

**NOTE:** Review the [COVID-19 14-day Symptom Monitoring Log with patient for either scenario above](#)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELEASING NON-COVID-19 PATIENTS FROM HOME ISOLATION – PCR TESTING ONLY (4/24/2020)

Patients with **negative** test results should meet the following criteria prior to **release from home isolation**:

- **Asymptomatic patient with known exposure to a COVID-19 positive patient:**
  - 14 days after exposure if patient never developed symptoms
- **Symptomatic patients:**
  - $\geq 3$  days (72 hours) *since recovery* = resolution of fever and improved respiratory symptoms
  - PLUS  $\geq 7$  days since symptom onset (to account for false negative results)

## FOLLOW-UP FOR POSITIVE PCR TEST RESULTS

Following COVID-19 PCR testing, the PCP should closely monitor patients for worsening of symptoms. Recommended conservative approach to follow up:

- **Two-day, post testing follow-up**
  - Check on patient **symptoms**
  - Re-enforce **14-day tracker use**
  - Re-enforce **home isolation compliance**
  - Results will likely be **pending**
- **Third or 4th-day, post testing follow-up**
  - **Discuss test results**
  - **Check** on patient **symptoms**
  - Re-enforce **14-day tracker use**
  - Re-enforce **home isolation compliance**
  - Re-enforce need to **call PCP with any worsening of symptoms**
- **Fourteen-day, post symptom onset follow-up**
  - For simplicity in guiding patients for clearance from isolation, consider asking patient to schedule a virtual visit follow-up no sooner than:
    - **3 days after resolution of fever**
    - AND**
    - **Improved respiratory symptom**

**NOTE:** If you haven't already, share the [COVID-19 14-Day Symptom Monitoring Log with your patient](#) so you can review their symptoms before or during their appointments.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELEASING COVID-19 PATIENTS FROM HOME ISOLATION/RETURN TO WORK - PCR TESTING ONLY (4/24/2020)**

Many factors affect the **decision to discontinue home isolation**. Patients should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions is **made on a case-by-case basis**, in consultation with healthcare providers under guidance from the state and local health departments.

The **most recent CDC-based recommendations** are as follows:

### **Current Options (Last Updated 4/3/2020):**

- **Non-Test based Strategy** (aka time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery strategy):
  - **≥ 3 days (72 hours) since recovery** = resolution of fever and improved respiratory symptoms
  - AND**
  - **≥ 7 days since symptoms** first appeared
- **Test-based strategy**
  - Resolution of fever
  - AND**
  - Improved respiratory symptoms
  - AND**
  - Negative results from **≥ 2 consecutive swabs** collected **≥24 hours** apart (total of two negative specimens)

**NOTE:** *The test-based recommendations have been simplified so that only **one swab** is needed at each sampling.*

**NETWORK UPDATE:** Serum antibody testing is now available. A full understanding of the science is still pending. In theory, a positive antibody test in the absence of symptoms and with a negative PCR supports the decision to release a patient to work or back into the community as a low risk, non-infectious, recovered patient with some degree of immunity. Therefore, we recommended you add an antibody test to one of the two clearance PCR tests.

## **ASYMPTOMATIC POSITIVE PCR TESTING PATIENTS**

Patients with positive PCR COVID-19 testing who never develop symptoms may discontinue home isolation 7 days after their positive test.

**NETWORK UPDATE:** In theory, a positive antibody test in the absence of symptoms supports the decision to release a patient back into the community as a low risk, non-infectious, recovered patient with some degree of immunity. Therefore, we recommended you consider adding an antibody test when making your clearance decisions.

## **OPTIONS FOR WHEN REPEAT CLEARANCE TESTING IS POSITIVE**

**Two options** currently exist to clear COVID-19 positive patients from home isolation if their repeat tests are positive.

- One option is to convert to a **Non-Test based Strategy** (aka time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery strategy):
  - $\geq 3$  days (72 hours) *since recovery* = resolution of fever and improved respiratory symptoms
  - AND**
  - $\geq 7$  days *since symptoms* first appeared
- **A second option** is to perform serial testing at least 24 hours apart until the patient has:
  - Negative results from  $\geq 2$  consecutive swabs collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart (total of two negative specimens)

**NOTE:** *This section will be updated when antibody testing become readily available.*