

A COVID-19 appointment-only drive-up testing site has been established in Mercer County. This is a joint, collaborative effort between Mercer County, Robert Wood Johnson, Capital Health, St. Francis and the Trenton Health Team (software). The county thanks the management at Quaker Bridge Mall and the leadership at Lawrence Township. The county also acknowledges the herculean efforts of all our municipal health officers, and salutes them, along with the other heroes in health care.

Who is eligible for testing?

Mercer will test symptomatic people ages 18 or older who have a prescription from their primary care physician.

Will there be a soft opening?

People will see a number of medical staff and volunteers training on Monday, March 30, however the site will NOT be open for testing. The site will be open for testing by appointment on Tuesday. It will be an abbreviated schedule in order to shore up the process. On Tuesday we expect to set 120 appointments and on Wednesday, we will go to a full schedule of 240 appointments per day.

How many test kits do we have access to? Who is supplying test kits? How many tests are we doing per day?

We are working on a “Just in Time” supply, meaning we get the kits as we needed. There is no “stockpile.” We get the next set of kits upon drop-off of specimens. For example, we will drop off the specimens taken Monday and will receive test kits for Tuesday, and so on.

We have contracted with Bio-Reference Laboratories to do 240 tests per day (except day one is 120).

Our agreement is for supplies for the first week. After the first week, we will be on an as-available basis, up to 240 per day. We are pursuing additional kits from other vendors to try and assure we can keep moving forward.

What are the hours?

We will be scheduling appointments from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday but we may need to adjust times and days depending on how things go and if we have a change in the availability of kits and/or testing capacity. You must come in a vehicle. There are no “walk-ups”.

What criteria for testing?

For the purposes of our site, the individual must be examined by a primary healthcare provider (PCP), possibly remotely. The PCP will determine the need for the test based on symptoms. **No one should be tested without being symptomatic.** If the PCP deems a test is necessary, they will fax a prescription to the call center. The call center will, in turn, call the patient, take registration information, and schedule an appointment, give instructions/directions for the testing site. We will break the appointments up to avoid long waits, but patients should anticipate being in the car for quite a while. It's important to note that no one will be allowed to leave their car at the site. We are only able to perform the collection on those 18 or older.

Where can a person go for approval for test?

The only way to schedule an appointment is by the Primary Care Physician to fax us a prescription.

What about people who don't have insurance, or people who don't have transportation?

We are extremely sensitive to the fact that not everyone has access a primary care doctor or transportation. We are actively solving those problems, particularly transportation from the City of Trenton to the test site, and will have a concrete answer in the next few days.

Who will administer the tests?

The physical test will be performed by a healthcare provider (nurse, technician, paramedic, EMT, etc.) The person collecting the specimen will be dressed in protective clothing, including a mask and gloves. They will insert a soft swab deep into the nose, swirl it a couple of times, withdraw it and secure the specimen for transfer to the testing lab. The procedure itself is fairly quick, less than a minute. To answer the question, check in, securing and logging the specimen and the collector washing and re-gloving is what takes up the balance of the time.

Do you have enough PPE?

We have enough PPE for providing the process. Different people at the site will be wearing different levels of PPE, from the collector in the full suite to street clothes by those distant to the collection tent. This is why it is imperative that everyone remains in their car and follows all instructions.

Who processes the test and when will results be available?

We will deliver the specimens to Bio-Reference Laboratories who will run the tests on the specimens. You can expect 48-72 hours, however it could be longer depending on volume. (I have heard up to 5 days)

Where do I get my results?

Your PCP will get your results and provide them to you.

What do I do if my test comes back positive?

We are leaving follow up instructions to the patient's doctor. We are developing a basic instruction sheet that will be handed to the patient just before the test is administered (contamination issues) which will state that the patient's primary should offer further instruction. Recognizing that the individuals were able to arrive at the clinic, follow-up activities should include directions to remain at home, under self-quarantine, and to relieve symptoms with over-the-counter medications, as needed. If their clinical condition has worsened since their specimen collection, they should be instructed to seek treatment in the emergency department of the closest hospital – with someone calling ahead to advise the emergency department.

Should contacts of contacts be tested?

No, being the contact of someone who has close contact with a person who has COVID-19 does not warrant testing.

If a person was at a conference/mass gathering and heard that there are people sick from COVID-19, should they be tested?

You should only be tested if you are symptomatic. If you notice that you have symptoms and feel that you need to be medically evaluated, contact your health care provider.



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March 29, 2020

Dear Healthcare Provider:

Mercer County will be opening a community COVID-19 testing site over the next few days for **Mercer County Residents Only that are 18 years or older**. For younger patients in need of testing, please make other arrangements. We need your expertise in order to test the individuals with symptoms in a coordinated effort.

Instructions to Refer Patients with Symptoms for COVID-19 Testing by Appointment Only

Please assist us with getting our Mercer County residents with symptoms tested by following the CDC guidelines found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html> and doing the following:

1. Complete a medical assessment for your patients reporting symptoms of COVID-19. Given limited resources, follow CDC guidelines (linked above) to determine if testing is clinically indicated.
2. Write a prescription for testing for patients you deem eligible based on your assessment. Be sure to include the patient's telephone number on the prescription.
3. Fax all prescriptions for COVID-19 testing along with a face sheet with patient name, date of birth, phone number and address, to the Mercer County COVID Testing Orders FAX at 609-630-4031. Orders received with incomplete information may be delayed.
4. Our call center will call the patient and schedule him/her with date and time, location, and instructions concerning the testing site. All testing is by appointment only.
 - Please instruct your patients to call you if their symptoms deteriorate or call 911 or go to the emergency department.
5. You will receive their test results as soon as they are available.
 - Please contact your patients with their test results and any additional information you deem appropriate based on their result

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation in this important effort. If you have questions please call 609-799-2011 between 9am and 4pm.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Hartman
Coordinator
Office of Emergency Management

