



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**

Guidance to Long-term Care Facilities Regarding Testing of Individuals Prior to Admission  
April 10, 2020

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) distributed [guidance](#) to long-term care facilities (LTCFs) that indicates patients and residents who enter facilities “should be screened for COVID-19 through testing, if available.”

Testing of individuals who have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, especially hospitalized individuals or residents of a long-term care facility, is [recommended by CDC](#). These specimens are currently accepted as [high priority specimens](#) at Idaho Bureau of Laboratories.

Testing of asymptomatic individuals has not been recommended by the CDC, and Idaho Bureau of Laboratories does not currently accept specimens from asymptomatic individuals. Therefore, any testing of asymptomatic individuals would need to be through clinical or commercial labs at this time.

Given the current turnaround time of SARS-CoV-2 test results (approximately 3-8 days), it is not recommended to keep patients who are otherwise stable for discharge in the hospital while awaiting results of SARS-CoV-2 testing. During the time that test results are pending, these individuals could experience new exposures that put them at risk of acquiring the virus that causes COVID-19. Even in the absence of new exposures, a negative test result does not preclude COVID-19 infection, as the individual could have been in the incubation period when the specimen was collected.

The availability of rapid testing in clinical and commercial labs should increase over time and make testing of asymptomatic individuals prior to admission to LTCFs a more feasible option. In the meantime, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare recommends that facilities consider [previously issued](#) and [current](#) guidance in managing new admissions with unknown COVID-19 status. If facilities do not feel that they can accept patients back to their facility with unknown COVID-19 status, they may contact the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Division of Licensing and Certification at (208) 364-1959 and ask to speak with either Jamie Simpson (assisted-living facilities) or Debby Ransom (skilled nursing facilities) regarding possible bed availability in other facilities that are able to accept patients with COVID-19 unknown status.