

Dr Delgado COVID-19 update 3/14/2020

The current situation is evolving hourly and the information being disseminated remains fluid. The guidelines in regards to the risks and recommendations in limiting transmission or potential exposure remain unchanged.

Testing remains limited not just locally, but also nationally. This morning, I have spoken directly with the Idaho Dept. of Public Health, St. Luke's Wood River Laboratory Dept., Interpath Laboratory & ARUP Labs in Boise. The limiting factor at this time for increasing both the availability and volume of testing remains the medium that the samples are placed in once collected. This medium functions to stabilize the samples while they are transported to the labs that are currently performing the testing analysis.

St. Luke's Wood River, as of this morning, has a very limited supply of medium and it is not clear as to when more will arrive. Interpath has also put a hold on any additional tests for the same reason. I was informed that St. Luke's does not want anyone coming on their own volition to the hospital or ER for testing unless they are having severe symptoms that merit an emergency evaluation. St. Luke's is currently supplying local urgent cares with the necessary medium and diverting those that meet criteria for testing to those locations. This does not ensure that those facilities will have the test available at any particular time.

While testing for COVID-19 can be now obtained without an order from an physician, I would currently advise against it. Discussing your symptoms with your provider, assessing those symptoms in conjunction with known risks factors i.e. underlying health, age, travel or possible exposure remains optimal for both you the individual and our community at large. Testing for any perceived symptoms of upper respiratory infection without proper vetting by your MD will likely lead to high volume testing that in most cases is unnecessary. This will almost certainly potentiate additional shortages in testing availability and prolong the processing of samples leading to additional delays in obtaining the results. Additionally, this would hamper our ability as a community to expeditiously determine who in fact has an active infection and isolate both them and their close contacts.

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough or any progressive respiratory distress please immediately self quarantine and call our office. Do not come to our office until you have spoken with me directly. If your symptoms and risk

factors of exposure suggest testing is indicated, I will determine the best path to obtain testing that day locally.

I would reiterate that if you were to obtain a COVID-19 infection the likely course will be short and limited in scope (or similar to an influenza-like infection). It is highly unlikely to progress and necessitate any additional measures other than supportive treatment while you remain at home convalescing and in quarantine.

My office is not currently able to provide testing directly as we do not have the current recommended protective barriers necessary to collect the samples and ensure the safety of my staff. Both gowns and safety masks are not available nationally and I will likely not be able to procure them in the near future. St. Luke's is not able to provide me with even three of either item due to their need to allocate their limited supply to caregivers in the hospital setting.

Addendum

I was just notified that as of this morning, March 14, Blaine County has its first confirmed case of COVID-19. In addition, there is a high likelihood that more positive cases that will be confirmed in the next few days in Blaine county.

With this in mind and to minimize your risk, I am cancelling all appointments currently scheduled in our office the week of March 16-20. The office will remain open and both my staff and I will be available to continue to address any of your health care needs. Any in office appointments during this period will be at my discretion. You will receive another email correspondence on Friday or March 20 as to our plans of operation the following week.

Please do not stop by our office unannounced unless you have called us prior as to the nature of your needs.

This is not a time to panic. Continue to limit your exposures to others. This simple step, by far, still provides the most impactful action you can undertake to limit your risk of acquiring the infection.

R. Delgado, MD