

Health Providers in Benton & Franklin Counties United in COVID-19 Efforts

(Kadlec, Lourdes, Prosser Memorial, Trios, Benton-Franklin Health District)

On behalf of the Benton-Franklin health care community, collectively our organizations would like to share some important information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) testing process.

First, thank you to our respective communities throughout Benton and Franklin Counties for their help to contain and stop the spread of COVID-19. It is no doubt a challenging time, but the collective can-do spirit of everyone will help us through this public health emergency.

We want to acknowledge the professional and dedicated efforts of our employees who are working day and night to serve our patients as well as our colleagues in public health. We know they appreciate the support and encouragement they have received from throughout the two counties.

Testing for COVID-19 is occurring in our communities. We continue to push for increased supplies of the needed materials to more widely collect samples from patients for testing. There is a nationwide shortage. The labs who are processing the tests are doing their best to keep up with the demand. In our area it is currently taking anywhere from 5-7 days to receive results.

The current priority for testing is people who are most at risk and those suffering the most severe symptoms of COVID-19.

Here is a brief summary how the testing process works:

- When a patient is experiencing respiratory illness symptoms, they are urged to call their provider to determine if any testing is required, whether they should be tested for COVID-19, or tested and treated for other infections such as influenza or pneumonia.
Only medical providers are able to order COVID-19 tests.
- If flu or other infections are ruled out, providers may then proceed to order a COVID-19 test.
- The medical provider will collect a specimen, which will then be sent to a state public health or FDA-approved lab for evaluation.
- The testing lab sends the results to the medical provider and the Washington Department of Health (DOH).

- The medical provider or clinical staff will contact the patient with test results.
- DOH reports the results to the Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) through an online reporting system.
- BFHD then notifies the public of test results (positive or negative) and follows tracing of positive cases for people they may have come into contact with.

We recognize the limited availability of COVID-19 tests may cause concern. During this time, public health experts advise that people who are mildly sick with what could be COVID-19 should stay home and treat their symptoms. If symptoms worsen, call a provider for advice before going to a clinic or office. Tests need to be reserved for the sickest, high risk patients and medical professionals. A trip to the clinic or hospital could spread exposure.

We'd like to remind you if you're experiencing only minor symptoms:

- You can and should isolate at home during illness. Restrict outside activities, avoid public areas (work, school, etc.) and refrain from using public transportation.
- Treat symptoms with rest, plenty of fluids and over-the-counter medications, as appropriate.
- Separate yourself as much as possible, staying in a separate room and using a separate bathroom, if available. Restrict your contact with pets and other animals.
- Be alert to any changing symptoms and seek prompt medical attention if your symptoms are getting worse (e.g. difficulty breathing)

Below are links to our respective websites where you can get more information on COVID-19.

- Lourdes Health (yourlourdes.com)
- Kadlec Regional Medical Center/Kadlec Clinic (kadlec.org)
- Prosser Memorial Health (prosserhealth.org)
- Trios Health (trioshealth.org)
- Benton-Franklin Health District (bfhd.wa.gov)
- Washington Department of Health (doh.wa.gov)

Finally, please stay at home when you are ill, unless you are experiencing respiratory distress, chest pain, or other sign of true emergency.

You need to know that your health care teams across Benton and Franklin Counties are working around the clock to care for patients and limit the spread of COVID-19. Thank you for your support of them. Please do your part by following "social distancing" practices and proper personal hygiene. Together we will get through this.