



TO: All Catholic Health Hospital Associates

FROM: Kevin Shiley, MD
Medical Director of Infection Prevention & Control

DATE: November 17, 2020

RE: Universal COVID-19 Testing for all Hospital Admissions starting Wednesday, November 18th

In light of the widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in Western New York, as of Wednesday, November 18th, Catholic Health will be re-instituting Universal COVID-19 screening tests for all hospital admissions. Over the past few months, Catholic Health has invested substantial resources in expanding its COVID-19 testing capabilities in anticipation of the current rise in COVID-19 cases.

In addition to diagnostic testing for patients with symptoms of COVID-19, *asymptomatic* patients without a known positive test for COVID-19 in the past 90 days will also be tested. The goal of universal screening is to reduce the likelihood of asymptomatic transmission within our hospitals. Test supplies do not allow for the implementation of reliable rapid testing on all admissions at this time; but reliable screening tests can now be performed during the day of admission on asymptomatic individuals admitted for reasons other than COVID-19.

Management of Asymptomatic Patients Admitted with Pending Screening Tests

- Asymptomatic patients should undergo a **screening** test for COVID-19. **Test orders should indicate that the patient is asymptomatic.**
 - Improperly labeling an asymptomatic patient as symptomatic will jeopardize testing for high risk patients and the sustainability of the universal testing program.
- The turnaround time for screening tests can be up to 12 hours.
- Screening tests **should not** be performed if there is documented COVID-19 in the preceding 90 days.
- Asymptomatic patients awaiting screening tests should not be held in the emergency department. They are not considered patients under investigation (PUI's), since they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Caregivers do not need to don "full PPE" (N95/gown/gloves/eye protection) for asymptomatic patients awaiting a screening test.

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- Asymptomatic patients awaiting screening tests should be instructed to wear a surgical mask except when eating or taking medications.
- If a patient cannot wear a mask pending the screening test result, a single room placement is preferred, if possible.
- Staff are encouraged to don eye protection (along with wearing a mask) whenever interacting with a patient that cannot wear a mask.
- Curtains between patients should be closed at all times in shared rooms, regardless of COVID-19 screening test results or status.
- Patients should always be asked to put a mask on when caregivers are in proximity of the patient, even if the admission screen was negative. If the patient cannot comply, caregivers are encouraged to wear eye protection in addition to a standard mask.
- If a screening test is positive, the patient should be placed in a single room with the door closed or a designated isolation ward and full PPE should be used at all times.

Management of Symptomatic Patients Pending Diagnostic Tests (PUIs)

- Patients being admitted with symptoms of COVID-19 should undergo **diagnostic** testing for COVID-19. **Test orders should indicate that the patient is symptomatic in the order.**
- Symptomatic patients should be considered PUIs pending the diagnostic test.
- PUIs should not be placed in a shared room unless they are found to be negative
- Full PPE (N95/gown/gloves/eye protection) should be used when caring for a PUI.
- The expected turnaround time for diagnostic testing for a PUI is about 2 hours.