What You Should Know
COVID-19

State of Missouri Team:

As the COVID-19 vaccine continues to roll out and become available to more of you, your family members and friends, it is important to know that the other measures we have been taking over the past year have not lost their value in the fight against this virus.

Wearing a mask, good handwashing and maintaining physical distance from those outside of our households will remain vital to controlling the spread of COVID-19. Another piece of this puzzle that has not lost its importance? Testing. Testing has allowed public health professionals to identify those who need to isolate and quarantine to avoid infecting others -- those with positive test results and those they may have already exposed.

We learned quickly in the early days of this public health crisis how common it was, and still is, to unknowingly have the virus and spread it, while never experiencing any symptoms. This factor means that our prevention measures and widespread availability to testing are that much more crucial in order to move us beyond COVID-19.

Why should a healthy person consider being tested for COVID-19?

- **To rule out the possibility that you have COVID-19 and don't know it.**

Make sure that you are not an asymptomatic carrier of the virus. Asymptomatic spreaders are a major reason containing this virus has been so challenging.

- **To take action early if you do have COVID-19.**

If you are in the early stages of a COVID-19 infection, detecting it early allows you to quickly isolate, rest and recuperate, monitor your symptoms and seek medical care if needed.

- **To spend time with friends and family--especially those at high risk.**

If you plan to spend a prolonged period of time with loved ones, especially older adults or those with underlying conditions, stay away from high risk activities for 10 days and then get tested.

- **To help get the virus under control.**

Widespread testing among healthy people helps to stop the spread of COVID-19. Screening healthy people, staying on top of positive cases, identifying new outbreaks quickly, and being aware of how the virus spreads among people without symptoms, are powerful tools in our efforts to suppress the virus.

It is important to remember that a COVID-19 test is a one-time assessment, and will only show if you are infected at the time of the test. Now, if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, there is no question that you should seek testing at a community testing event or your nearest testing site. Those who have had significant contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19 should also consider being tested.

Free Community Testing Update

The State of Missouri has been hosting community testing events in locations throughout the state since April of last year with the help of many partners. These events are continuing in 2021, and they allow for a convenient testing option even for those who do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

Community testing events are continually being scheduled and added to the listing found at health.mo.gov/communitytest. These tests are completely free and available to any Missouri resident.

To register for a community testing event, visit health.mo.gov/communitytest.

Team member sentinel testing occurs each month

The State of Missouri continues to provide free COVID-19 sentinel testing to workforce members. This month, we have increased our availability of tests. Fifteen percent of state locations (roughly 5,000 team members) are randomly selected each month for this testing. If you are selected for sentinel testing, you will receive an email asking you to register to take the test. We encourage you to participate. This testing effort has one goal - to keep you and your family/friends safe. By taking this test you are able to identify if you are asymptomatically carrying COVID-19.

If you test positive, you will be able to alert anyone you have been in contact with to get tested themselves. We encourage each of you to look in your email on February 2 to see if you have an invitation to register.

February team member sentinel testing will occur February 16-18.

For additional information on testing, please go to our intranet site. We have also provided a video.

Thank you for all you do to help us protect the health and safety of Missourians.

In good health,

Dr. Randall Williams

Director, Department of Health and Senior Services