News and Announcements

News Release
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State launches pilot of COVID-19 test at home saliva program

Pilot allows Minnesotans to remain in homes for free testing; initially only available in select areas

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) today announced a pilot of the COVID-19 Test at Home saliva program. Beginning today, Minnesotans in two dozen counties or tribal nations will be able to order a saliva test online, to perform in the comfort of their own home. These tests are available in select service areas free of charge to any Minnesotan who believes they need to be tested. It will soon be available to all Minnesotans.

“Minnesota’s testing strategy includes having multiple options for people seeking out testing,” said Minnesota Department of Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. “Having more options helps to remove barriers, ensuring all Minnesotans have access to quick and reliable testing. The continued increase in COVID-19 cases across Greater Minnesota, tied to small, everyday gatherings, is very concerning. Testing is one way we slow the spread of COVID-19, and the mail order program provides yet another method for Minnesotans to access testing.”

The pilot Test at Home program is available to residents of:

- Rock County
- Kittson County
- Le Sueur County
- Beltrami County
- Red Lake Nation
- Wilkin County
- Carver County
- Nobles County
- Wright County
- Dakota County
- Mower County
- Becker County
- Kandiyohi County
- Crow Wing County
- Cook County
- Aitkin County
- Steele County
- Itasca County
- Douglas County
- Lyon County
- Pine County
- Otter Tail County
- Swift County
- Pennington County

These places selected for the initial pilot represent geographically diverse areas of the state, prioritizing locations that do not currently have a saliva testing location or where community testing events have been limited. Minnesota currently has four saliva testing sites open, in Duluth, Winona, Moorhead, and Brooklyn Park, with Mankato scheduled to open Friday and up to five more to follow in coming weeks.

Through the mail order program, Minnesotans can order a saliva test online to be shipped to their home. They then perform the test by spitting into a small tube, under the supervision of a health care professional through a video telehealth visit. Once completed, the test is shipped to the state's new saliva lab in Oakdale, Minnesota, where results are then emailed to the person in 24-48 hours.

"The saliva testing program has made our testing strategy more resilient by offering a convenient method that further reduces the risk of exposure to COVID-19," said Dan Huff, MDH assistant commissioner for health protection. "We're eager to make the Test at Home program available - the pilot will provide important information for how the program will work not just in our more populated areas, but more remote locations as well. We'll use that information to make necessary adjustments before making the program available to all Minnesotans statewide, as soon as possible."

"We are pleased to have this option for COVID-19 testing," said Debra Jacobs, Wilkin County Public Health Director. "Wilkin County residents, who are close contacts to a positive case, have run into barriers to be tested. It is difficult in Wilkin County to be tested if you do not have symptoms. The closest free testing site is 50 miles away. Transportation and hours available are barriers for some residents. We are excited to have this opportunity to offer residents the option to be tested in their own homes. We are working on a plan to further assist residents who do not have the technology to obtain and complete the test."

“This is a welcome addition to our comprehensive approach to reduce the spread of COVID-19,” said Carol Biren, Public Health Director for Southwest Health and Human Services, which includes Rock and Lyon Counties. “We know this continues to be difficult and many are eager for better days ahead. But we must remain diligent in this by social distancing, washing your hands, avoiding large gatherings, masking, staying home when you’re sick, and getting tested if you’ve been in close contact with someone who’s tested positive or have symptoms yourself.”

Testing is free to all Minnesotans who believe they need a COVID-19 test, including those who are asymptomatic. Participants will be asked for their health insurance information so the state can bill their insurance company on their behalf. If a person is uninsured or for any reason insurance does not cover some or all of the cost, the state will cover the difference so testing remains completely free to everyone.

For more information on the COVID-19 Test at Home program, and to order a test, please visit COVID-19 Test at Home (/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html).

-MDH-

Minnesota Helpline:

For questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, call 651-297-1304 or 1-800-657-3504.

Mental Health Crisis Line - Call: **CRISIS (**274747)

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