

# **National Testing Guidelines for COVID-19**

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**Government of Nepal**  
**Ministry of Health and Population**

# National Testing Guidelines for COVID-19

## Objectives

- To standardize laboratory testing criteria for SARS-CoV-2 in Nepal
- To facilitate and ensure common understanding on COVID-19 laboratory testing throughout the country
- To ensure rational use of the laboratory resources in order to contain COVID-19 spread

## Priorities for COVID-19 testing

- **Priority 1:** Ensure early detection, isolation, and prevention of the spread
  - All suspected cases with high risk of infection (e.g. highly mobile population, returnees from other countries or high-transmission areas)
  - Contacts of the confirmed cases
- **Priority 2:** Ensure optimal care at health facilities, lessen the risk of healthcare-associated infections, and maintain the integrity of the healthcare system
  - Frontline health care workers (e.g. doctors, nurses, laboratory personnel, paramedics) and support staffs (e.g. ambulance driver, health facility support staffs)
  - Staffs working in critical functions (e.g. security force, waste care management workers)
  - Patients requiring urgent medical and surgical attention with high suspicion of COVID-19
  - Patients at higher risk of adverse outcomes (e.g. people with underlying chronic conditions; elderly) with high suspicion of COVID-19
- **Priority 3:** Ensure containment in the community spread as well as health of essential workers
  - Individuals in the surrounding community of rapidly increasing cases
  - Individuals who have symptoms, but do not meet any of the above categories
- **Non-Priority:**
  - Individuals without symptoms AND no contact AND no travel history
  - Individuals with interest in self recommended testing

## Testing Methods:

- RT-PCR will be used for diagnostic purpose.
- All serology tests including the Rapid tests can be used for surveillance and/or research purpose and for screening purpose during discharge from the quarantine.

## Criteria For Testing

### 1. Test the following cases using RT-PCR as follows:

#### a. All suspected cases of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>:

- i. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and cough OR fever and shortness of breath), AND those coming from COVID-19 transmission areas during the last 14 days prior to onset of symptoms.
- ii. A patient with any acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) AND having been in contact with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case in the last 14 days prior to onset of symptoms.
- iii. A patient with severe acute respiratory illness-**SARI** (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath, AND requiring hospitalization).

#### b. All other cases with following criteria:

- i. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) AND new loss of smell OR taste.
- ii. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) AND any two of these (chills, muscle pain, diarrhea, sore throat).
- iii. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) in the absence of an alternative diagnosis that fully explains the clinical presentation.
- iv. Any **person having been in contact** with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case.
- v. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) with underlying chronic conditions, immunocompromised conditions, as well as elderly patients.

### 2. Test the following medical and surgical cases using RT-PCR:

- a. For **life and limb-threatening conditions**, do not delay the surgery/procedure, even for patients that meet the criteria outlined under 1a or 1b above. Proceed with appropriate COVID-precautions without waiting COVID-19 tests/results. Do not delay the procedure in order to take a swab. Take a swab – if indicated – either before or after the procedure, as appropriate.
- b. For **elective cases**, conduct the test only if there is clear indication (i.e. meeting the criteria stipulated under 1a or 1b above). If negative proceed with surgery/procedure.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2020). Global surveillance for COVID-19 caused by human infection with COVID-19 virus: interim guidance, 20 March 2020. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331506>.

- c. For **medical conditions requiring admission** including dialysis, test only those meeting the criteria stipulated under (1) and (2) above) coming from COVID-19 high transmission areas.
- d. **Children under 18 years** test those with fever (>3 days) AND two of the following: (i) rash, non-purulent conjunctivitis or muco-cutaneous inflammation; (ii) hypotension or shock; (iii) new cardiac abnormalities; (iv) new bleeding disorder; and (v) diarrhoea, vomiting or abdominal pain.

**3. Test following Health Care Workers and Support Staff using RT-PCR:**

- a. All asymptomatic frontline healthcare workers and support staff including ambulance driver, laundry cleaners, those involved in caring and transferring of probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients, AND with history of accidental breach of infection prevention and control measures (PPE), test between 5-7 days of such incident/last exposure (**Note:** the incident must be properly documented).
- b. All healthcare workers and support staff working in COVID and Non-COVID health facilities having symptoms (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath).
- c. All frontline healthcare workers and support staff those involved in caring and transferring of probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients test as per need.

**4. Test all frontline staff other than healthcare workers (Security force, waste care management workers) having symptoms (fever and cough or fever and shortness of breath) with RT-PCR.**

**5. People in holding center and quarantine:**

- a. For all symptomatic cases, test RT-PCR. If negative, rule out other cause of illnesses and treat accordingly.
- b. For those asymptomatic in quarantine, keep in and release from quarantine as per the quarantine guidelines – no tests required\*

\*तर हाललाई क्वारेन्टिनमा रहेका व्यक्तिहरुको १४ दिन पछि आर.डी.टि. परिक्षण गरिनेछ ।

**6. Confirmed cases in isolation:**

- a. For asymptomatic cases who have completed 14 days - **no tests required.**
- b. For symptomatic cases who have completed 14 days AND spent at least 3 days without symptoms - **no tests required.**

## **Annex I: Definitions of Key Terminologies**

- Confirmed Case: A person with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms.
- Probable Case: A suspect case for whom testing for the COVID-19 virus is inconclusive. OR A suspect case for whom testing could not be performed for any reason.
- Contact<sup>1</sup>:
  - Face-to-face contact with a probable or confirmed case within 1 meter and for more than 15 minutes;
  - Direct physical contact with a probable or confirmed case; OR
  - Direct care for a patient with probable or confirmed COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2020). Global surveillance for COVID-19 caused by human infection with COVID-19 virus: interim guidance, 20 March 2020. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331506>.