



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
***DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES***

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Dear Primary Care Provider,

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to helping control the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and protect people from health complications such as hospitalization and death. Preventing spread of COVID-19 allows schools, businesses, and other community organizations to continue to operate during this pandemic. Our collective community mitigation measures (i.e., social distancing, face mask use, hand hygiene, avoiding high-risk group/social gatherings) help control spread of COVID-19 in NH and allow society to function during this pandemic. An additional measure to help stop the spread of COVID-19 is for people with symptoms of COVID-19 to be excluded from public settings and tested for COVID-19. That strategy alone will not identify every person with COVID-19, but will help limit the spread. We continue to ask for you to facilitate COVID-19 testing for your patients that develop any new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19. There are multiple locations throughout the state where a patient can be referred for [COVID-19 specimen collection and testing](#).

Early in this pandemic, attention was focused on people presenting with fever, cough, and shortness of breath; however, we now know that COVID-19 presents with a broader range of even common mild symptoms, as listed on the [CDC webpage](#). The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) recommends that anybody with any new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19, even mild singular symptoms, should be excluded from school or work and tested for COVID-19. This means that someone with new cold or viral infection symptoms (including viral upper respiratory, gastrointestinal, or generalized body symptoms) should be tested for COVID-19. It is important to NOT wait for progressive illness to have a symptomatic person tested for COVID-19. We know, for example, from national and NH-specific data that only about 40-60% of people who are symptomatic with COVID-19 will have a fever. We also know that fever may not be one of the first presenting symptoms and it could take several days after illness onset for fever to occur. We also know that viral loads tend to be higher early in illness, so early testing soon after symptom onset is important to optimize test accuracy, improve detection, and minimize spread.

In New Hampshire, fever and cough are common symptoms reported in all age groups of people with COVID-19, but mild symptoms are frequently identified. Out of 442 total persons in New Hampshire aged 0-19 years that were symptomatic with COVID-19, more than 1-in-4 persons reported mild symptoms including sore throat, rhinorrhea, myalgia, headache, and the unique symptom of loss of test and smell at some point during their illness (see table below separating symptoms by age group). While most people presenting with COVID-19 develop more than just one symptom during their illness, people have reported only singular symptoms, including rhinorrhea, nasal congestion, or sore throat, as examples. We do not track progression of every illness in ambulatory patients diagnosed with COVID-19, but we believe that some of the earliest signs/symptoms of COVID-19 will be more mild symptoms, as is often seen with other viral respiratory infections. Therefore, we

continue to request that primary care providers help to facilitate testing for COVID-19 for any patients who develop new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19, even if only mild and/or singular symptoms.

**Table.** Proportion of Symptomatic Persons with COVID-19 in NH Reporting Specific Symptoms by Age Group

	Age Group (Years)	
	0-9	10-19
<b>No. Reporting Symptoms</b>	124	318
<b>Percent Reporting Symptoms</b>		
Fever	64%	41%
Cough	39%	42%
Shortness of Breath	6%	12%
Rhinorrhea	27%	28%
Nasal/Sinus Congestion	10%	10%
Sore Throat	11%	36%
Myalgia	13%	31%
Headache	10%	46%
Nausea or Vomiting	9%	14%
Diarrhea	16%	9%
Loss of Taste or Smell	4%	36%

Without testing, such individuals will be assumed to have COVID-19 and be instructed to stay home for at least 10 days after start of their symptoms. If a symptomatic person is tested within an appropriate time frame with an appropriate test (PCR- or antigen-based test) and tests negative, then the person can return to school, work, etc. once they are also without fever (off any fever-reducing medications) and other symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours.

Thank you for continuing to help protect our communities from COVID-19. We appreciate the challenge it is to prevent spread of this infectious novel coronavirus, while also maintaining preventive medical care and addressing the many emotional, mental, and physical health needs resulting from this pandemic. This response has required our collective efforts, and we appreciate your partnership. If you have any questions or concerns about our public health recommendations, please feel free to contact us at 603-271-4496.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Chan, MD, MPH  
New Hampshire State Epidemiologist