

8/26/20 Community Town Hall Questions

Topic: Testing

Employee Testing

- How often are nurse and staff tested?
- Why was staff testing pushed back a week (from last week to this week) and not all are actually being tested. The staff is saying this is the case.
- Shouldn't staff be tested constantly, regardless of symptoms?
- Do you have a future plan of more frequent testing of staff to catch before a cluster goes out of control, ie are you planning more frequent surveillance testing of your HCW and staff?
- Are staff members tested regularly?

All Maui Health employees and providers have been asked to participate in mass surveillance COVID-19 testing. The surveillance testing started with patients, and then prioritized testing order with patient-facing employees/providers first, and then proceeding to non-clinical employees.

Frequency of testing employees for COVID-19 will **vary** depending on which facility the employee works at, nature of their job, risk factors and if the employee has symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Some employees are being tested every week if they work in high risk units. Any employee that is experiencing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are required to stay home, call in to their manager, and can be evaluated by a health care professional with the option of being assessed and tested in the MMMC ED. They are required to follow return to work guidelines that keep them out of work for a set number of days, depending on their symptoms, exposure level, and test results. These return to work guidelines CDC recommendations. Frequency of testing may also increase based on the positivity rate in the community. For example, our employees that work in the long-term care facilities will be part of routine testing based on the communities' positivity rates which begins in September and will continue monthly as required by CMS. All these factors are considered to determine how often employees will need to be tested.

Regarding the rescheduling of some employee testing, yes, testing days/times for some of our non-direct patient care area employees was pushed back by a few days in order to open up availability to a high-risk group that required testing within a certain time frame. Please know that if for some reason any of these employees initially viewed as lower risk because of their department or role at Maui Health had any exposure or reason to be tested at a higher priority, we would make arrangements to keep their test at urgent priority level. They were only rescheduled because of their low risk status. We know our employees understand that testing high risk employees first is a protocol in place to protect all of our patients, providers and employees, and are understanding of these unforeseen events that may require their appointments to be rescheduled.

Employee Screening

- How are you screening employees?

Employees are educated on symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and are instructed to continually self-monitor for signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 they are instructed to call out sick, and they have the option to be assessed and tested for COVID-19 at any of our facilities Emergency Departments. Additionally, each Maui Health facility screens employees prior to entry by checking their temperature and surveying them for any symptoms. Employees that do have a temperature are immediately referred to our ED for an assessment. At our MMMC location we have dedicated Advanced Practice Providers that only see employees.

Employee Quarantine and Return to Work Guidance

- Are staff members allowed to self-quarantine while waiting for test results whether they are required to be tested or on their own?
- Are staff scheduled to work after a known exposure occurs before they receive a test?

Employees that have been exposed to COVID-19 without wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment or exposed in the community that are determined to be high risk are excluded from work for 14 days from the last day exposed. There are options to have employees return to work after high risk exposures, after testing negative, and based on staffing operations. These cases are managed case by case with enhanced monitoring and screening in place.

Employees that are being tested for COVID-19 due to having symptoms are excluded from work pending their test results. They may only return to work if their test returns negative AND it has been at least 48 hours since their symptoms have improved. We have specific guidance for symptoms that are available for employees and managers, and Maui Health Employee Health Department provides additional guidance to ensure employees are only back at work if it is safe for them to be. Employees may choose to be seen by one of our Providers in the ED or their personal health care provider. Important to note, that all employees who are required to remain off work because of an exposure risk are paid for their time off through our COVID-19 Positive Leave Hours employee benefit.

Testing – other

- Shouldn't the hospital be taking advantage of the \$1 saliva antigen tests that are quick and easy to perform with 15-minute results? Every patient could be tested before admission and daily after that. We only have one hospital on the island - what is the barrier preventing this from happening? Does the hospital need help from those of in the community who are concerned, to coordinate this essential change?
- Are there still restrictions on testing on Maui?
- Do the patient tests use PCR or antigen tests?
- Do you use pooled testing to enable broader testing?

Maui Health conducts PCR COVID testing on a Hologic Panther machine. We do not use pooled testing at this time. Regarding the saliva antigen test that produces results in 15 minutes, it is not an option for Maui Health at this time because we would still need to validate those rapid results with a PCR test for the highest level of accuracy, which would defeat the purpose of the quick test. While [PCR testing remains the preferred test in healthcare, the FDA has recently issued emergent authorization on a saliva antigen test. This type of testing is not yet available for mainstream consumer purchase; however, the federal government has recently purchased 150 million tests for distribution. Specific dates are not known at this time.](#)

We cannot speak to testing restrictions on Maui as that continues to change based on demand and prevalence of infection in the community but we recommend that you watch the County of Maui's daily COVID updates for more information on testing being offered on Maui.

[Maui Health and Clinical Labs of Hawaii have recently acquired a Hologic Panther machine that is able to run 1,000 per day. Currently, at Maui Health, we have ample testing supplies for our employees and patients but staffing constraints \(to facilitate and process tests\) still exist.](#)

Kaiser Testing Question

- There's been a curbside testing tech at Kaiser's testing clinic who is reported buy outside (not hospital) healthcare providers to not be doing the test correctly. She knows this because she has both given the test and has taken it multiple times herself. When nicely expressing her concerns to the tech she walked away. when she expressed the serious concerns to Kaiser doctor she was brushed off "just be glad you're negative" The hospital needs to address serious situations like this. Patients (especially healthcare provider patients) need to be heard and taken seriously. What is Kaiser doing to ensure their staff is indeed running these important tests to fidelity? Are they doing fidelity checks on staff?

Although affiliated with Kaiser Permanente (KP), Maui Health hospitals and clinics are not KP facilities. Maui Health also does not manage KP facilities or operations including the Kaiser Clinic in Kihei, or any drive through or walk up testing operated by KP clinics. For more information on the clinics and hospitals operated by Maui Health, visit [MauiHealth.org/locations](https://mauihealth.org/locations).