

COVID-19: Department of Public Health Explains What It Takes to Get Tested in El Paso

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Dr. Hector Ocaranza, health authority with the El Paso Department of Public Health, on Tuesday urged the the City Council to close bars, arcades and clubs as a precaution to stop the spread of the coronavirus. (Photo: Aaron Montes/El Paso Times)

The city of El Paso Department of Public Health has shared this step-by-step process on how the public can be tested for the coronavirus:

Step 1: All area residents should stay home whenever possible and monitor themselves for flu-like symptoms. This includes cough, fever and shortness of breath. If a combination of all three symptoms does not improve over the course of 72 hours or worsens, they should contact their health care provider.

Step 2: If a resident has all these symptoms AND has traveled outside of the El Paso region or if they have had close contact with someone who is a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, they should contact their health care provider immediately.

Step 3: The health care provider will assess the patient who is seeking care and should rule out other causes of symptoms, including allergies and the common cold. Additionally, patients must provide proof of being negative for influenza and strep throat.

Step 4: After health care providers rule out other sources of illness, they should contact the Department of Public Health Epidemiology Program for triage, based on the Texas Department of State Health Services guidelines.

Step 5: If approved by the Public Health Epidemiologist, the health care provider will receive a “test number” from the epidemiology team. Using proper personal protective equipment, the provider will collect and submit two upper respiratory samples (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs), plus a third lower respiratory sample if possible.

Step 6: The health care provider will then notify the Department of Public Health Laboratory prior to submitting the sample to the lab. While awaiting results, it is important to have the patient self-quarantine at home if he or she is discharged from care.

Step 7: Once the samples have been analyzed, the results will be sent to the health care provider to notify the patient. Positive results will trigger an epidemiological investigation by the Department of Public Health.

Residents who do not have a primary care physician or who do not have insurance should dial 211 and select option six for a referral to a health care provider. There is no cost for the approved test analysis conducted by the Public Health Laboratory.

Further information and details are available at www.EPHealth.com at the COVID-19 page.