

Frequently Asked Questions

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *What steps have been taken in South Dakota to flatten the curve? What could be some next steps?*

We believe the interventions being implemented now are effective: committing to social distancing, school closures, remote work recommendations, hand washing, etc. We will continue to evaluate the situation and make additional recommendations as appropriate. For updated information visit covid.sd.gov. By practicing social distancing, we can slow the spread of this virus. Together, we can lessen the impact to our state's healthcare system.

2. *How long should the restrictions stay in place? Is this a short-term situation or will there be long-term changes?*

We will continue to follow CDC recommendations, evaluate situations and make additional recommendations as appropriate. For updated information visit covid.sd.gov.

3. *Beyond hand-washing and social distancing, what else can I do?*

If individuals have fever and other symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, please stay home and call your healthcare provider for medical advice. The best way to prevent contracting and spreading COVID-19 is to reduce exposure.

During this time, it is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry. Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time. Taking care of your emotional health during this time will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect you and your family. Self-care is essential. Remember to maintain some level of normalcy.

4. *What can employers do to help reduce the spread of COVID-19?*

Encourage employees to stay home if they are sick. If you suspect an employee is ill or has been exposed, follow CDC guidelines and separate them from others as soon as possible and send them home. More detailed strategies are outlined by the CDC [here](#) and within the Department of Health [COVID-19 Business Q&A](#).

5. *What should owners of public establishments do during this time?*

Consider business arrangements and innovative ideas to support critical infrastructure sectors, as defined by the [Department of Homeland Security](#), as those employees have a

special responsibility to maintain their normal work schedule. More frequently asked questions for employers regarding workplace safety can be found at in the [COVID-19 Business Q&A](#).

TESTING

6. *How are the field-level samples being gathered? Mouth swabs, stool samples?*

CDC recommends the collection of nasopharyngeal specimens.

7. *How long does one sample take to process once the SD Public Health Lab has the sample?*

Your healthcare provider will typically have the test results within 36 hours of the SD Public Health Lab receiving the specimen. This timing is dependent on availability of testing supplies and risk of the patient. The Department of Health will continue to update this information daily on [covid.sd.gov](#).

8. *What is the SD Public Health Lab testing capacity? And has the lab secured a supply of testing supplies?*

Daily updates from state officials outline the status of testing supplies. For updated information visit [covid.sd.gov](#).

9. *Where will the commercial testing operations be located, and which organizations will be running them?*

South Dakota health systems are working on building commercial lab availability and we will work with those labs as needed to get tests run in our state.

10. *Who is being tested? Is there an order of testing priority?*

At this time, the SD Public Health Lab is not testing asymptomatic individuals. The SD Public Health Lab is testing symptomatic healthcare workers, hospitalized individuals, and individuals in communal living (i.e. long-term care and assisted living facilities, etc.).

Any healthcare provider can order a test for their patients at the provider's discretion. However, the Department of Health recommends good stewardship practices for the use of specimen collection supplies and tests. Healthcare providers can send tests to commercial testing facilities if the patient does not meet the criteria of the SD Public Health Lab.

For more information about the order in which tests are processed visit [covid.sd.gov](#).

HEALTHCARE READINESS

11. *How many respirators and ventilators are available in South Dakota? Is there a sharing agreement in place so they can be shifted within organizations and among organizations? Is*

there a backup plan in place if South Dakota has more patients than there are available respirators and ventilators?

Ventilator availability fluctuates rapidly and can change multiple times in a single day, like many other medical supplies. We will continue to manage critical equipment, such as ventilators, daily to ensure all available equipment is deployed where it is most needed.

12. Where do South Dakota's three major healthcare providers stand regarding readiness?

The Department of Health as well as regional healthcare planning coalitions in the state have been planning for contingencies such as disasters or outbreaks for several years which includes surge capacity among other things. This planning includes contingencies for additional capacity as the need arises. Individual hospitals and facilities also have preparedness plans in place. The Department of Health works closely with partners throughout the year to build and maintain relationships, infrastructure and expertise necessary to prepare for and respond to public health emergencies.

EFFECTS AND SYMPTOMS

13. Regarding patients who contract the illness, what leads to death? And will lungs recover, or will they be permanently damaged?

COVID-19 infection can cause pneumonia, bronchitis, and respiratory failure. The long-term effects of COVID-19 infection are not known.