Q&A about COVID-19 Prevention and Testing in Lebanon: How to Advise your Patient?

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WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain, discovered in 2019, and not identified previously in humans.

Common signs of infection may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients might experience sore throat, runny nose, and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death.

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT COVID-19 INFECTIONS

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean them with an alcohol-based (60° minimum) hand rub.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Practice respiratory hygiene by covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
4. Avoid crowds and maintain a social distance of at least 1.5 meters if you have to go out and **stay home** as much as possible.
5. Self-quarantine* for 14 days if you are returning from a trip to any country.
6. Stay home if you feel unwell; seek medical care early if you have fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or any other respiratory symptom.
7. Follow the directions of the Ministry of Public Health and other local authorities.

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html
https://moph.gov.lb/ar/Media/view/27170/novel-coronavirus-2019-

MOPH Hotline: 1214 and 01/594459

*Self-quarantine means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with others, such as social gatherings, work, school/university, child care, athletic events, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and any public gatherings.

WHAT IS A COVID-19 DIAGNOSTIC TEST?

Besides staying home and adopting proper hygiene measures, the next step in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is to know **when** to test, **where** to test, and **how** to interpret the test.

The objective of the test is to confirm the disease among people who have a history of exposure to infected persons or who have clinical symptoms, such as fever, dry cough, dyspnea, and other upper respiratory symptoms.

Samples are collected from the nose or throat of the patient and sent to the laboratory for testing. Adequate samples of expectorations are collected in sterile dry containers, while nasopharyngeal swab are placed immediately into sterile tubes containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html
https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-testing-diagnostic-covid19-united-states

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COVID-19 APPROPRIATE TESTING

1. Get tested ONLY after consulting with a healthcare provider over the phone if possible, if you think you have been exposed or if you have clinical symptoms suggestive of a COVID-19 infection.
2. If recommended by the healthcare provider, the test has to be performed in an accredited laboratory to be accurate, reliable, and valid. Get tested at Rafik Hariri University Hospital or one of the 4 recommended laboratories by the Ministry of Public Health: American University of Beirut Medical Center, Hôtel Dieu de France Hospital, LAU Rizk Hospital, St George Hospital University Medical Center-Beirut. More laboratories might become available for testing; always check with the Ministry of Public Health whether or not they are approved for testing.
3. **WEAR A MASK** on your way to the laboratory, in the room while waiting to get tested, and until you get totally out of the testing facility, as you might encounter positive people and get infected.
4. If you **SELF-TEST,** make sure the laboratory you choose is reliable.
   a. Ask the laboratory questions on whether they are using the adequate kit (get the kit's name and look for its validity)
   b. Make sure the laboratory is reporting results to the Ministry of Public Health.
   c. If you get a **POSITIVE** result, **report it immediately** to your healthcare provider to get the guidance on the steps to follow.
   d. If you get a **NEGATIVE** result, **consult again** with your healthcare provider to make sure it is not a FALSE NEGATIVE.
   e. Even if your test is **NEGATIVE,** you are required to **keep on following the recommendations** to prevent COVID-19 infections.

RISKS OF A FALSE NEGATIVE TEST TO THE PATIENT AND THE COMMUNITY

They include delayed or lack of treatment, lack of monitoring of infected people, and those they were in touch with, resulting in an increased risk of spread of COVID-19 within the community.
HAVING A FALSE NEGATIVE TEST IS MORE SERIOUS THAN TESTING POSITIVE!

HOW MUCH TIME BEFORE GETTING THE RESULT?

Depending on the laboratory, it might take 24-72 hours to have the result.

HOW TO INTERPRET A NEGATIVE TEST?

- A negative test result means that SARS-CoV-2 RNA was not present in the specimen above the limit of detection. It does not rule out COVID-19 infection and should not be used as the sole basis for treatment or patient management decisions.
- A negative test result does not exclude the possibility of COVID-19 infection. A false negative result should be suspected if the exposure or clinical presentation indicate that COVID-19 is likely, and diagnostic tests for other causes of respiratory illness are negative.
- If COVID-19 is still suspected based on exposure history together with other clinical findings, re-testing should be considered in consultation with the healthcare professional, as recommended by the public health authorities.

https://www.fda.gov/media/135662/download

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MOPH Hotline: 1214 and 01/594459
To test for COVID-19

Rafik Hariri University Hospital: 01-830000
American University of Beirut Medical Center: 01-350000
Hôtel Dieu de France Hospital, Rodolphe Mérieux Lab: 01-615300; 01-331707
Saint Georges Hospital University Medical Center: 01-441000
LAU Medical Center Rizk Hospital: 01-200800

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