



13 March 2020

COVID-19 testing tightened amid chemical shortage

WA has tightened the testing criteria for Western Australians who suspect they may have COVID-19. This is due to a global shortage of the chemical reagent required for laboratory testing and follows deliberations at the Council of Australian Governments meeting today.

The move comes as PathWest was notified by its reagent supplier last night that due to the shortage, it could no longer meet PathWest's previously-assured order and that future supplies could also be in jeopardy.

Effective immediately, COVID-19 testing in WA will be available only to individuals who:

- have fever (temperature of 37.5 deg or above) or respiratory illness
- can provide evidence of recent overseas travel (for example, airline ticket or passport stamp) **or** have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Also effective immediately, all COVID-19 testing in the metropolitan area will be performed only at COVID clinics, located at Royal Perth, Sir Charles Gairdner and Fiona Stanley hospitals. No tests will be accepted from metropolitan general practitioners and PathWest will no longer be collecting patient samples for COVID-19 testing.

In regional areas, people should go to a public hospital, health service or remote health clinic.

WA's Chief Health Officer, Dr Andrew Robertson said strengthening the testing criterion was in line with other jurisdictions around the nation and would enable the WA to continue to test high-risk patients at the height of the expected pandemic.

"WA has made this decision because we need to act now to protect the WA community.

"We know resources will be stretched for many months to come so this is a strategic and responsible approach by our health system to safeguard our supplies.

"We appeal to the public to work with us and continue to exercise vigilance during this difficult time to help us minimise the impact of COVID-19 on Western Australia."

WA has now had 14 cases of COVID-19. In addition to these cases, 3788 people have tested negative to the virus. This represents a low positive rate and the risk of contracting COVID-19 in WA remains low.

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