

HOT TIPS #116 DATE 05/18/2020

Please copy and distribute to ALL physicians at your location.

Increasing COVID-19 Testing in Ventura County

We have enough testing kits in Ventura County that we are now able to liberalize criteria for testing COVID-19 infection and increase COVID-19 testing. **It is important to test people if you have the slightest suspicion that they are positive for COVID-19. Also, test close contacts of proven cases.** Please refer any suspects to get tested to one of the COVID-19 testing sites at www.vcemergency.org under the “COVID-19 Screening Locations” tab.

Over the last week, about 650 COVID-19 PCR tests have been collected from patients in our County each day. In order to move forward with our plans to liberalize our local economy while at the same time continuing to drive down the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 infection, we as a County must expand testing, isolate those individuals we find with COVID-19 infection and test and quarantine their close contacts. So far, following the “Stay Well VC” Order has allowed us to gradually open and improve our economy without jeopardizing safety and social distancing. If Ventura County is able to increase testing, maintain social distancing and meet certain criteria, we can move safely into Phase 2. This Phase allows our County to open indoor dining, open many businesses for indoor shopping and allows our schools, grades K through 12, to open in the fall. Each of these will have certain limitations placed on them to preserve social distancing. These are steps which will lift the spirits of our County residents but of course they come with concerns that they will increase the opportunity for the spread of infection. By testing more people than we have in the past, we should be able to decrease the number of infected people in our County. The next goal we want to attain is the **testing of 1,300 people per day.**

A good number to monitor the true amount of COVID-19 in the community is the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations across the County’s eight hospitals. This figure is a true reflection of COVID activity because people become sick and are hospitalized with COVID whether they have been tested or not. Recently, the daily number has been running at around 25, a slight decrease over recent weeks. It is in all our interests to lower that number even further. To that end, Ventura County has brought on approximately 60 contact tracers, individuals who will find close contacts of cases to support quarantine until those identified either prove to be COVID positive or finish their 14-day quarantine. By increasing the amount of testing we do, we will identify more COVID positive cases. Identifying more cases and contacts and assuring that they don’t transmit their infection to others will ultimately lead to fewer cases in the County. It is the clinicians in our County who will be the driving force to meet this goal.

This bulletin is intended to improve the public health in our county by keeping physicians and nurses informed of noteworthy diagnoses, disease trends and other events of medical interest. Another goal of a public health department is to educate. We hope that you will use this information to increase your awareness. Please allow us to continue in our role of speaking to the press so that we may maximize the educational message to the benefit of all citizens of Ventura County.

Communicable Disease Office

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