Common COVID-19 Questions Answered

What is a POSITIVE COVID-19 patient?

A positive COVID-19 patient is a patient with a confirmed positive COVID-19 test result. Currently, it takes 5-7 days to receive results on average, (though 7 days is what some are running now due to volume of tests reaching the test center). A positive patient could be at home recovering or admitted to the hospital depending on severity of symptoms.

What is a PRESUMED positive?

A presumed positive is when a patient shows signs of having COVID-19 but test results have not yet been received to confirm the diagnosis. A patient who is very sick may be admitted to the hospital for care and precautionary procedures will be followed by associates and clinical staff as if this patient were a confirmed positive. If the patient is well enough to recover at home, the patient will be sent home with instructions for care and to follow quarantine guidelines. The patient will be notified when test results are received. **A presumed positive is only considered a confirmed positive when test results are received.** Again, it currently takes 5-7 days to receive results.

Why does it take so long to get a test result – didn't someone say there was a rapid test option?

The rapid test option will soon be available nationwide, but is not currently. This is not just a Hamilton Medical Center issue – this is nationwide. That is why a patient is considered a "presumed positive" if symptoms and illness indicate the patient most likely has the disease. Until the faster test is available, it takes 5-7days on average for test results to be received.

I've heard Hamilton has more COVID-19 patients than has been reported by the hospital. Is that true?

We have patients in our hospital that are considered "presumed positive" and are being treated according to protocols as if they are positive. Also, we receive more test results every day. The number of positives could change daily – or more often as this disease spreads in the community. We are posting test counts on our website to keep the community informed, but remember, these counts change frequently and will only include those patients tested at Hamilton. Please visit *www.HamiltonHealth.com/covid-19* to get the latest updates regarding Hamilton tests for COVID-19.

*Please remember, the counts posted on our website only reflect tests conducted by Hamilton Medical Center and not other healthcare facilities or the Health Department.

When are test results reported on the DPH site?

COVID-19 is a reportable disease. That means that if the hospital or other healthcare entity that provides tests for COVID-19, such as the Health Department, receives a positive test, they will report that positive to the Department of Health (DPH). DPH provides updates to the public daily on positive test results by county.

Why does the DPH site not always show the same numbers as what I've heard is the number of positive cases?

Keep in mind, it may take 24-48 hours for the test results to make it to the update depending on the time of day it is received.

Is the count by county only the positives from Hamilton Medical Center?

No, the count by county is based on patient county of residence. For example, a resident of Whitfield County who is tested at another facility will not show in Hamilton's counts of positive cases but would show in the Whitfield County numbers on DPH. Similarly, if residents from other counties seek care at Hamilton Medical Center, those numbers will show up in the patient's county totals.

Also, if a patient receives a test from the Health Department or other healthcare facility, those tests will not show up in Hamilton Medical Center's test results, but they will show in the patient's county numbers.

Finally, if a resident is at home and is self-quarantined but the patient's symptoms were mild to moderate and did not require medical care, this person may not have sought out testing or was told to assume they are a positive and quarantine. This person would not show in the number of tests or in the number of positive tests because DPH is only reporting positive test results.

I went to the hospital emergency room to be tested but was sent home and told to quarantine. Why was I not tested?

We follow CDC and DPH guidelines. If someone comes to the emergency department with fever and respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they will be evaluated. If symptoms are not severe, the person may not need to be tested. In this case, the emergency department may provide instructions to monitor symptoms and quarantine to see if symptoms worsen or if fever continues.

I'm concerned and just want to be screened, or my employer says I need a doctor's note to miss work. Can I come to the hospital to be tested for COVID-19?

It is important that those who are well and are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 not go to the Emergency Department for testing. Hamilton follows CDC and DPH guidelines for testing.

Why are we not being told where patients who test positive work/live/have been to make sure we're not exposed?

This is a good question and it indicates one very important thing: people are worried. That is understandable, but the most important thing to remember is that if you are out and about or are not practicing social distancing guidelines, it is best to assume you will be exposed if you haven't been already.

There are privacy protections as part of HIPAA that all healthcare providers must follow. Even if we could tell you identifiable information about patients and every place someone has been, there are people in the community that may be sick and never have symptoms severe enough to seek care. That means exposure is happening with people that may never come to Hamilton Medical Center.

Hamilton Medical Center is not the only healthcare facility conducting tests for this community, and some people who may have COVID-19 self-quarantine to monitor symptoms without being tested. Untested cases will not be included in positive test counts.

Patients who test positive are notified and instructed to notify those with whom they have had contact.

Stay home except for essential needs. Follow social distancing guidelines. Assume you will be exposed if you do not follow guidance for social distancing.

Please remember, the number of cases will continue to increase, and they will increase rapidly if social distancing measures are not followed. Everyone plays a role in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Again, visit *www.HamiltonHealth.com/covid-19* to get the latest updates regarding important information about COVID-19 and Hamilton's tests for COVID-19. **No amount of tracking will help if people are not social distancing. Stay home. Social Distance.**

Social distancing is the best way to prevent exposure or to at least lower your risk of exposure. It is everyone's responsibility to social distance. One more time… Stay home. Social Distance.

What do I do if I think I have symptoms of COVID-19?

- First, contact your primary care provider.

- If you don't have a primary care provider, you can contact one of Hamilton's Convenient Care locations, or an urgent care.

- If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest Emergency Room.

- If you are not having severe, emergent symptoms that require you to seek emergency care, self-quarantine and follow the instructions of your primary care provider.

- If you do need medical attention, please call ahead whenever possible so that the care team can prepare to care for you.