Effective March 25, 2020

Hennepin Healthcare recognizes staff in homeless shelters and drop-in centers as priority populations for COVID-19 screening and testing

Due to limited COVID-19 testing capacity, Minnesota has had to prioritize certain populations to be a high priority for testing. Health care workers are a high priority group and are prioritized for testing. Individuals that live in congregate settings such as homeless shelters are also a priority population for COVID-19 testing. Additionally, Hennepin Healthcare is expanding its internal definition of priority populations to include staff that work in congregate settings like shelters and drop-in centers.

Screening and testing options

If you are a staff person working in a homeless shelter or drop-in center and you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, the easiest way to be screened is through an e-visit. Go to hennepinhealthcare.org/evisit.

An E-visit helps figure out if you should be tested, and then tells you where to go to get a test done. This is easier and often faster than going to the Emergency Department, as the test will be ordered in advance and you will be given instructions on where to go to do the test. This also helps limit the amount of time someone who has symptoms spends in public spaces (like a clinic or the emergency department) where it is more likely to catch or pass on a virus. You may also be asked how bad your symptoms are to decide if you are sick enough that you should see a doctor.

You do not have to be a current Hennepin Healthcare patient to use e-visits. All major insurance companies have waived co-pays for COVID-19 e-visits.

If you don’t have access to a computer for an e-visit, call 612-873-6963 to determine testing options.

Screening questions

In addition to asking about symptoms, the screening will ask about your work status. Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), following recommendations from Center for Disease Control (CDC), has focused on health care workers as a job class that should get tested if they have COVID-19 symptoms. Hennepin Healthcare is now expanding the definition of “essential” employees to include staff from other vital community, congregate settings:

- work in a homeless shelter or drop-in center
- work in a correctional facility such as a jail or prison
As of March 24, tests are taking roughly 5 days to get results to know if you have the COVID virus or not. Hennepin is working to expand testing capacity and aims to significantly reduce the turnaround time for results.

To learn more about COVID-19 and Hennepin Healthcare services, visit www.hennepinhealthcare.org.