

COVID-19 FAQ

This list is intended to help answer questions from the community of Skagway. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Please see the State of Alaska's FAQ page for more information. If you have other questions you can email the clinic at clinicinfo@skagway.org, or call the state resource number 211, or attend the state's weekly science ECHO Wednesdays at 12pm.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 INCLUDING SYMPTOMS, TREATMENT, CONTACT TRACING

- What symptoms are currently on the coronavirus watch list?
 - Fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.
 - If someone who is positive for coronavirus is showing any of the following signs **call 911**: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.
- What happens if someone is symptomatic for COVID-19?
 - Stay away from others and don't leave your home until you know you don't have COVID-19 AND you feel better.
 - Wear a mask or cloth face covering when you are around others.
 - Call DMC about getting tested. For the safety of other patients and staff, don't enter the clinic if you are symptomatic. Call first.
 - If you're not in Skagway, call a local clinic or public health nurse, or visit this site for a list by state: <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/community-based-testing-sites/index.html>
 - **If you are experiencing an emergency, always call 911.**
- What happens if someone in Skagway tests positive for coronavirus?
 - Depending on how sick they are the person will go into isolation or they will be transferred out of Skagway. The State Office of Epidemiology and Skagway EOC would be notified as soon as possible. Public notice will be issued about the result and give further guidance should shelter in place be required.
- If a patient tests positive for COVID-19 can/would isolation be required?
 - Yes, they would be required by Public Health to isolate themselves in their home. If they live with others they should isolate themselves in another room away from other family members. If they cannot, the Municipality does have places for self-isolation that can be used.
- Why can't we use herd immunity as a solution toward re-opening?
 - Herd immunity happens when enough people have developed immunity to a particular infectious disease that the risk of further community transmission is either eliminated or reduced. That requires a certain percentage of the population to be exposed to and infected with COVID-19 so that they develop immunity against it in the form of antibodies. These antibodies not only protect the person who has them from re-infection for a certain period of time, they also

prevent them from passing along the disease to others, because their immune system kills whatever it is that causes it. Doctors estimate that about 60-70% of the human population would need to have antibodies in order to have herd immunity as a species. In addition, to get to that number without a vaccine or treatment would result in many fatalities. From the point of view of healthcare providers, there is no fatality rate that is acceptable.

- What is a ventilator and are the clinic providers trained to use them?
 - A ventilator is a machine that helps an unconscious person breathe when they cannot effectively breathe for themselves. It pumps oxygen rich air into the lungs.
 - All providers know how to use a ventilator and review their skills with medical staff at least monthly. The clinic currently has two ventilators.
- How is contact tracing done?
 - Contact tracing is done by a specifically trained state public health official. They speak with COVID positive individuals, determine their close contacts, reach out to the close contacts, and give both the COVID positive individuals and their close contacts the information and guidance they need to isolate, quarantine, and/or test safely.
- Who does the contact tracing? Will Public Health tell people who it is?
 - State Public Health performs contact tracing. Other medical providers and health professionals are currently being trained to contact trace should Public Health be overwhelmed. Due to HIPAA they will not release an individual's information. However, the individual can and is encouraged to share their diagnosis in order to assist with contact tracing others who were in close contact with them. If you know someone in town is positive or if you think you had exposure to a COVID-positive person, and you were not contacted by Public Health, you were likely not considered a close contact. If you have questions, call the clinic and speak with a provider.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS INCLUDING MASKING AND DISINFECTING

- How should I properly wear a cloth mask?
 - Wash your hands before putting on a mask. Place it over your nose and mouth and secure it under the chin. Try to fit it snugly against the sides of the face. Make sure you can breathe easily.
- How effective are masks?
 - It depends upon the mask and how many layers there are to the mask. Those with high thread count, finer weave, water resistant, and better fit would appear to give better protection. They should be rated for water resistance. The mask you wear protects the persons around you while the masks they wear protect you by keeping droplets from spreading as far as they normally would when

coughing, sneezing, or talking. Link:

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/10/20-0948_article

Recent studies have been done on masks and the effectiveness of certain masks over others. DHSS and DMC continue to recommend the public wear cloth masks as a general rule.

- Should I wear a mask while engaging in outdoor activity?
 - The greater ventilation and air flow of outdoor activities is helpful but not entirely risk-free. You should maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet and even more, up to 25 feet, for strenuous activities such as hiking or running. You should keep a mask on you or in your pocket in case you encounter others.
- What are the recommended methods of cleaning surfaces?
 - Use an EPA approved product that is effective against COVID-19. The list is found here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19> . (Click on “Export to pdf” to get the entire list as a pdf. Otherwise you can search by product name.)
 - A bleach solution can be prepared by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of room temperature water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of room temperature water
 - Check the expiration date on the bleach bottle to make sure it hasn’t expired.
 - Bleach solutions are effective for disinfection for up to 24 hours.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>
 - Protect your skin and eyes, and watch for splash potential
 - Ensure adequate ventilation
 - Read and follow the directions carefully. Use no more than the amount recommended. Be sure to let the product sit for the amount of time noted in the directions.
 - Avoid mixing chemical products.
 - Do not repurpose food containers for hand sanitizer, disinfectant, or diluted bleach solutions.
 - Label any repurposed containers clearly and keep them out of reach of children and pets.
- Do people need to worry about food being contaminated?
 - As long as the food has been cooked or washed it should be fine. If someone else brought it to you wash or disinfect the outside of the container.
- Do people need to worry about mail being contaminated?

- If you are concerned with mail being contaminated keep it outside in the garage or mudroom for three days. Use hand sanitizer after handling mail. If the mail item is a nonporous package, wipe it down with disinfectant.

TESTS

- Why am I seeing blood-typing related to COVID-19 in the news and is it valid?
 - There was a study that discovered an association between ABO blood types and COVID-19. The study found that there was an increased infection rate among those with blood type A and decreased infection rate for those with blood type O. This data and the COVID-19 virus are still very new so this has limited usefulness until it is utilized in more studies.
 - Does the clinic know my blood type?
 - Possibly. If the clinic drew blood from you for labwork it does NOT necessarily mean we know your blood type. Blood-typing is a very specific lab that is not usually done. If you donated blood at a blood bank (such as at the last Skagway Health Fair), you will have received your blood type at that time. If you had labs done during pregnancy we may have your blood type on file.
- Where do I isolate?
 - Separate yourself from other people and animals. If there are others in your household stay in a specific room and away from everyone else as much as possible. Use a separate bathroom, separate linens, and separate dishes and utensils if possible. If you are unable to effectively isolate where you live, contact the clinic for guidance and assistance.
- What are the different kinds of tests and why doesn't the clinic have them all?
 - Viral tests, also called PCR swab tests or molecular tests, are used in Alaska to check for current infection. Some machines (i.e. Abbott ID Now, Cepheid) process viral tests rapidly while other samples are collected and sent to the Alaska State Public Health Laboratories, commercial lab or other health care facilities for processing. Turnaround times for results vary, from less than an hour for rapid tests to several days for results sent to laboratories.
 - Antibody tests are not widely used in Alaska at this time. The tests have not been clinically verified to diagnose or exclude COVID-19. The antibody response in infected patients remains largely unknown and the clinical value of antibody testing has not been demonstrated. False positives can occur and further research is needed to understand how this test might be used to understand disease prevalence in the community. People can take weeks to make antibodies against the virus. We do not know yet if having antibodies to the virus can protect someone from getting infected with the virus again, or how long that protection might last.

- We continue to research all test types and machines. Due to supply chain issues, we have been unsuccessful so far in getting additional test machines. Demand far outweighs supply right now.
- Some test types and machines are beyond the scope of DMC's lab. We have a fairly small lab with limited equipment.
- For more information on types of tests:
<https://www.fda.gov/media/140161/download>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>
- Why can't we test more people faster?
 - The state-supplied Abbott ID Now is the only machine DMC has. It only tests one specimen with one test cartridge at a time. It takes 15 minutes to run a specimen in the machine. In order to process each specimen medical staff must follow specific PPE, specimen handling, and transfer procedures. Once finished, a provider or RN will call and give the patient their result. The response time for results will depend on their clinical schedule and any emergencies currently in the clinic, but on average the time from swab to result call is about 30 minutes. Results from PCR tests sent to the State Public Health Lab or to Labcorp can vary from 3 days to 2 weeks depending on mail-out time, outbreaks that may currently be overwhelming the lab, and the testing burden at that time.
- Why can't we test everyone regularly?
 - We have a finite number of testing cartridges so must prioritize how we use them.
 - As testing evolves we hope to accommodate widespread testing.
- Who needs to test?
 - Anyone traveling from out of state (Alaska resident or not) must test under the state's Mandate 10. Those details are available here:
<https://covid19.alaska.gov/travelers/>
 - If traveling outside of Skagway to a community with a known active case of COVID-19, the clinic recommends testing upon return.
 - If you have any of the following symptoms please call the clinic for testing -- *fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, decreased appetite, diminished sense of taste or smell, diarrhea, fatigue, headache, muscle/joint aches, nausea, rash, rigors, runny nose, sore throat, or sputum production.*
 - If Public Health deemed you a close contact to someone confirmed to have COVID-19, Public Health may recommend testing. However, Public Health requires close contacts to quarantine for 14 days. The 14 days cannot be shortened by testing. It must be completed.
- Are visiting providers required to test?
 - Yes, all visiting providers including dental crew are required to test each and every time they come to Skagway. The visiting providers were all proactive and

inquired about testing requirements when they scheduled their visits to Skagway. For that, and for continuing to serve Skagway safely, we truly appreciate them.

OTHER HELPFUL OR IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Our recommendations are not political. Our “agenda,” our mission, is to keep people safe.
- All three providers have extensive emergency training and we do trainings at least monthly.
- We are doing everything we can to stay on top of the situation. The clinic has group calls with DHSS, the State Office of Epidemiology, the State’s Public Health Labs, public health, and other medical professionals around Alaska weekly to share and discuss the most current medical and scientific articles, advice, state policies, and resources.
- We don’t like wearing masks any more than you do. Yes, they’re hot. Yes, they’re a pain. We wear them to keep you safe, and we need you to wear them to keep each other and us safe.
- This is a new situation for us all, not just in our community or statewide, but globally. As time passes and we continue in pandemic conditions, medical and scientific knowledge of this virus increases. Testing criteria, equipment, and recommendations may change. DMC uses available knowledge and resources to inform our decisions, and we encourage the community to do the same.
- Whatever happens, remember to be kind and not panic. If we help each other we can get through this together.

RESOURCES

- If you’re having difficulty managing anxiety or depression due to coronavirus, please call the clinic to speak with John Hischer. He is a valuable resource for us all in these times, and his sessions to manage COVID-19 related anxiety are currently at no charge in order to help the community cope with the pandemic.
- If you need medical assistance, have medical questions, or need hand sanitizer or masks, contact the clinic at (907) 983-2255 or by email at clinicinfo@skagway.org.
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Municipality of Skagway COVID-19 Information Page: <https://www.skagway.org/administration/page/coronavirus-covid-19-information-page>
- State of Alaska COVID-19 Travel Information including mandates, forms, FAQs: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/travelers/>
- State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS): <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>