

POCT vs. PCR: Clinician Guide to Ordering Appropriate COVID Test

Previously, providers in the ambulatory setting generally used PCR testing for diagnosis of COVID19 in asymptomatic patients. Beginning 4/19, we now have the option of Abbott ID NOW Point-Of-Care Test (POCT) available as an alternative with advantages including: a rapid test result (within 15 minutes), only requires anterior nares sampling, and provides patients with results at the time of the test. The current ambulatory referral order (REF778) has been upgraded to an order panel and now includes PCR and POCT lab orders along with the referral as a single panel for convenient ordering.

When To Use POCT vs. PCR

POCT is approved for **asymptomatic** COVID testing for:

- Non-Aerosol Generating Procedures (non-AGPs)
- High-risk professions, such as Child-care, Healthcare, Frontline workers
- Patients with structural barriers to care, such as homelessness, undocumented or minority groups
- Low-risk individuals who are requesting testing for travel, employment or personal choice

POCT is more of a “snapshot” and less sensitive than a PCR. Hence, at UCSF we continue to use PCR testing (not POCT) for:

- 3 High-risk asymptomatic scenarios
 - Procedure/ Surgery under Anesthesia Care
 - Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs)
 - Inpatient Admission
- Symptomatic/ Exposed/ PUI (person under investigation for COVID)

With the availability of POCT, UCSF Health can now accommodate testing for all UCSF Health patients in all [SFDPH Testing Advisory Tiers](#). These tiered groups with the appropriate COVID test and testing locations are further outlined in the table below:

PCR vs POCT - APPROPRIATE PATIENT COHORTS AND TESTING SITES			
	SYMPTOMATIC / EXPOSED/ PUIs	ASYMPTOMATIC Patient needing AGP or ANESTHESIA or ADMISSION	ASYMPTOMATIC Patient - OPTIONAL TESTING for NON-AGP and other GENERAL INDICATIONS
TEST	PCR ONLY	PCR ONLY	POCT Recommended, PCR OK
SITE	LH or RSC (per patient preference)	LH or ATC (per patient preference)	ATC ONLY
COHORTS	SFDHP PRIORITY LEVEL 1: Contact Tracing 1. Any close contact exposure 2. Investigation and management of outbreaks SFDHP PRIORITY LEVEL 2: Symptomatic 3. Any patient with new or worsening symptoms 4. Confirmatory Tests for False COVID Positive Workup	PRIORITY LEVEL 2A: Asymptomatic High Risk Procedures 1. Asymptomatic: pre-Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs) 2. Asymptomatic: Pre-Surgery or Procedure with Anesthesia Care 3. Asymptomatic: Planned Admissions	SFDHP PRIORITY LEVEL 2A: Asymptomatic High Risk Patients 1. Asymptomatic: pre-NON-AGP Procedures 2. Asymptomatic: other high risk professions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work or live in congregate care or correctional facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Child Care at UCSF ii. Koz and Family House caregivers b. Work with providing care to elderly or disabilities c. Work in emergency/first responders, incl police & firefighters 3. Asymptomatic: People With Structural Barriers to Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Living in high-density situations b. High-risk economic/work conditions c. Racial/ethnic minority groups d. Immigrant/undocumented e. Disabilities, developmental and behavioral disorders f. Homelessness g. Drugs or SUD SFDHP PRIORITY LEVEL 3: Asymptomatic Lower Risk 4. Asymptomatic: people who work in areas w/ freq public interaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Retail/ manufacturing unable to maintain > 6 ft distancing b. Food services sector c. Agricultural or food manufacturing d. Public transportation e. Education SFDHP PRIORITY LEVEL 4: Asymptomatic Low Risk 5. Asymptomatic person who believes they are at risk 6. Routine testing by employers (re to school, employment, or travel)

How to Request a COVID Test

Beginning Monday 4/19/21, clinicians can indicate their preference for POCT or PCR and order the appropriate COVID lab order using the "Ambulatory Referral to COVID Testing" (REF778) order panel. For pre-procedure testing, POCT should be requested on the day of the procedure as it results within 15 minutes and is valid for 24 hours. In contrast, please continue to request pre-procedure PCR testing 2-4 days prior to the procedure. Please call the central scheduling line at 415.476.6407, option 3 with urgent requests (if needed within 24 hours).

Where Will Patients Be Tested:

The central scheduling team will preferentially schedule asymptomatic, unexposed patients for COVID testing in their ideal location at the Asymptomatic Testing Centers (ATCs) or Laurel Heights Drive Thru (LH) instead of the Respiratory Screening Clinics (RSCs). Symptomatic patients/ PUIs requiring a swab only will be scheduled at LH and those requiring a provider evaluation or additional testing will be directed to the RSCs. MB and PARN ATCs can perform both the rapid **POCT** as well as the traditional nasopharyngeal **PCR** swab tests for asymptomatic patients.

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