



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Saliva Testing Now Available in Wyandotte County

New type of test at 78th and State Ave for people who live or work in Wyandotte County

REVISION: More data was needed on the saliva swabs, so in November, the Unified Government Public Health Department returned to the tried and true nasopharyngeal tests. Original press release on saliva testing below.

Beginning today, the Unified Government Public Health Department (UPGHD) is offering COVID-19 saliva testing at its new COVID-19 testing facility at 7836 State Avenue in Kansas City, KS (the former Kmart location). This new test method will replace the previous type of test used at this location. The previous testing method used a nasopharyngeal swab (swabbing the back of the nose/throat).

“We are excited to have this new testing method available at the testing site at 78th and State Avenue,” said Juliann Van Liew, Director of the Unified Government Public Health Department. “We feel people will find this to be a more comfortable, less intimidating way to get tested for COVID-19, and this will encourage even more Wyandotte County residents to come get tested for the virus.”

How Saliva Testing Works

In this new testing method, the swab is held under the tongue for 60 seconds to collect the sample. There are other guidelines to know about before you come to get tested, according to Van Liew. These include:

- Do not eat or drink for 15 minutes before arriving to get tested
- Do not smoke for at least 30 minutes before getting tested

“It’s very important to follow these guidelines before you come to get tested, otherwise, your sample won’t give an accurate result,” explained Van Liew.

The turnaround time for results of the saliva test is the same as for the previous nasopharyngeal test – approximately 48 hours from the time of testing to getting results. Both the saliva and nasopharyngeal test conducted by the UGPHD are what is known as polymerase chain reaction (or PCR) tests. PCR tests detect the molecular makeup of the virus.

Saliva Testing Coming to Wyandotte County Schools

Saliva-based testing will soon be coming to Wyandotte County schools as well, according to Van Liew.

“We’ve been working in very close partnership with school leaders and nurses to establish COVID-19 saliva testing in schools,” said Van Liew. “This means that students who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested right away, in their school, versus being sent to another testing facility and potentially exposing more people to the virus. This new capability wouldn’t have been possible without the support and partnership of school leaders and nurses throughout Wyandotte County. It’s a big step forward in identifying positive COVID-19 cases in schools, which allows us to take the steps needed to isolate those students and protect the health and wellbeing of other students, teachers and school staff.”

Testing supplies are being delivered to schools today. The UGPHD Chief Epidemiologist, Elizabeth Groenweghe, will be doing training with school nurses early next week, making saliva testing for students available by midweek. The school-based testing will only be available for students who develop symptoms of COVID-19, allowing the testing to be done at the school versus sending the student to another testing site. Couriers will collect testing samples from schools throughout the County each day and deliver them to the lab for analysis.

The next step forward will be to make a combination flu/COVID-19 saliva test available. The UGPHD is working with Sinochips, a diagnostic laboratory which operates on the University of Kansas Medical Center campus, to provide a saliva test that combines three tests in one – simultaneously testing patients for COVID-19, influenza A and influenza B. These combination tests are expected to be available by late November.

Learn more about COVID-19 in Wyandotte County at [wycokck.org/COVID-19](https://www.wycokck.org/COVID-19) or by calling 3-1-1.

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