



COVID-19 UPDATE

Date: Dec. 7, 2020
To: Our Akron Children's Hospital Physician/Provider Colleagues
From: Akron Children's Hospital COVID-19 Incident Command

In this update, we provide the latest guidance on assessing which pediatric patients should be tested for COVID-19 in ambulatory settings, as well as recommendations on providing return-to-sports clearance for young athletes following COVID-19 infection in light of the potential for cardiovascular complications.

SARS-CoV-2 Testing Guidance for Ambulatory Practices

COVID-19 is a highly serious, potentially deadly infection that continues to circulate widely in our community. As the number of children with symptoms consistent with SARS-CoV-2 infection increases, we are providing this guidance to help providers assess who should be tested in ambulatory settings.

Most children and adolescents infected with SARS-CoV-2 will be asymptomatic or have mild illnesses, but they can spread the infection to others. Symptoms may be mild or severe, and can be quite varied. Unfortunately, there is no particular symptom or combination of symptoms that allows for more targeted testing. In fact, most symptomatic children will have a viral infection other than SARS-CoV-2.

Therefore, in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics¹, we recommend that children with the following symptoms be considered for testing unless an alternative diagnosis is certain, i.e. urinary tract infection, cellulitis, appendicitis, etc.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Congestion or runny nose
- Loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Body aches
- Fatigue or headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

Additional considerations:

- Children who are tested should be isolated and masked until test results are known.
- The AAP and CDC recommend testing of asymptomatic close contacts of people known to be COVID-positive. Akron Children's and other facilities currently do not have the capacity to test asymptomatic patients, but this may change in the coming months. At this point, follow close contact quarantine guidelines for this group when indicated, or they can be tested elsewhere. Find locations here: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/testing-ch-centers/>
- Children with an identified cause of fever, such as cellulitis or UTI, do not require testing for SARS-CoV-2.
- Recommend asymptomatic household contacts of children who are tested should be quarantined until test results are known² when the Ohio Public Health Advisory Warning System³ is at threat level red or purple.

See references on page 4.

For questions, please consult our COVID hotline at 330-543-COVID (2683).

COVID-19 Return to Sports Clearance

There is a growing body of evidence that COVID-19 infection can cause persistent damage to the adult myocardium, raising concerns about the risk of sports participation even in young adults who have fully recovered from the acute illness.

For that reason, children with SARS-CoV-2 positive tests or those with COVID-19 disease often require return to sports clearance by a health care professional. Guidelines have been prepared for the adult population, but the same level of guidance is not yet available for children.

The milder course of COVID-19 disease, lower incidence of cardiovascular complications and general absence of significant medical comorbidities suggest that most children are at lower cardiovascular risk than adults, but data are lacking.

As a result, these recommendations have been prepared and reflect, in part, the advice of the American College of Cardiology regarding return-to-play sports participation for pediatric patients following COVID-19:

1. **All asymptomatic patients** with test-confirmed COVID diagnoses require a minimum of 10 days isolation from the test date prior to gradual return to play.
2. **All mildly symptomatic patients** may gradually return to play 10 days after symptom onset unless symptoms persist beyond 10 days. Cardiovascular testing or consultation should be considered if symptoms are protracted or with other individual situations.
3. **For patients < 12 years of age with moderate (non-hospitalized) and severe (hospitalized) symptoms**, we recommend:
 - a. 10-day convalescent period following symptom resolution, **AND**
 - b. Medical evaluation with consideration of cardiology consultation/testing prior to gradual return to play.
4. **For patients ≥ 12 years of age with moderate (non-hospitalized) symptoms**, we recommend:
 - a. 10-day convalescent period following symptom resolution, **AND**
 - b. Cardiology consultation and testing to include ECG, Troponin and echocardiography prior to gradual return to play if appropriate based on test results and cardiology recommendations.
5. **For patients ≥ 12 years of age with severe (hospitalized) symptoms**, we recommend:
 - a. 14-day convalescent period following symptom resolution, **AND**
 - b. Cardiology consultation and testing to include ECG, Troponin and echocardiography prior to gradual return to play if appropriate based on test results and cardiology recommendations.
6. **Any patient with new cardiovascular symptoms or cardiac-related findings during convalescence or those with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)**, we recommend:
 - a. Cardiology consultation and testing to include ECG, Troponin and echocardiography prior to gradual return to play if appropriate based on test results and cardiology recommendations.
7. **Any patient with myocarditis**, we recommend:
 - a. Prolonged period of inactivity (3-6 months) prior to gradual return to play if appropriate and at the direction of cardiology consultant.
8. All non-COVID infections should be guided by previously established illness-specific return to sports criteria.

Call these departments with questions: Heart Center 330-543-8521 • Sports Medicine 330-543-8260



Physician Leadership Changes

In January 2021, Akron Children's will have a new interim leader at the head of our Department of Pediatrics. Dr. Norman Christopher is leaving Akron Children's at the end of December to assume the role of Chief Medical Officer at the Children's Hospital of San Antonio in his native Texas. Dr. Christopher joined Akron Children's in 1995 and served as medical director of our Emergency Department until 2008, when he was named the Dr. Noah Miller Chair in Pediatric Medicine. In the ensuing years, he led the Department of Pediatrics through the successful expansion of many primary and specialty care services and programs. Norm was instrumental in recruiting and supporting residents, fellows and physicians, and his team-building skills will serve him well in his new position.

Stepping into the role of Interim Chair of Pediatrics on January 1, 2021, will be Dr. Michael Forbes, current Medical Staff President. Dr Forbes is a pediatric critical care intensivist in our PICU, who also serves as a professor of Pediatrics at NEOMED. As Director of Hospital-Based Medical Practices and Director of Clinical Research and Outcomes Analysis in the PICU, he is involved in many local and national quality improvement initiatives to improve the delivery of safe, timely, effective and efficient pediatric intensive care. He has served as Medical Staff President since 2019 and has been leading our medical staff through the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic including the training and privileging of pediatric caregivers in preparation for treating adults should area hospitals require our assistance handling a surge of patients.

Congratulations to Dr. Christopher and Dr. Forbes.

Surgery Update:

These new surgeons have recently joined Akron Children's. Find referral information at akronchildrens.org or contact your liaison for more information.

- **Dr. Mark Wulkan** joined Akron Children's as the new chair of surgery in August and has assumed the Bruce F. Rothmann, MD Chair in Pediatric Surgery. He oversees these surgical departments: Burn, Cardiovascular Surgery, Pediatric Dentistry, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, Neurosurgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, General Pediatric Surgery and Urology.
- **Dr. John Polousky** joined Akron Children's as Division Director of Orthopedic Sports Medicine in August.
- **Dr. Ashish Francis** joined the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Center in October.

How to refer patients to Akron Children's Hospital

For direct referrals using EpicCare Link:

- To schedule an appointment for new and existing patients, we recommend using EpicCare Link. This interface gives community-based providers inside access to a streamlined referral process. When you place a referral order in EpicCare Link, it is routed directly to the specified department and placed automatically in the department's work queue. Once received, a patient representative will contact the patient family to gather more information and schedule an appointment. Using EpicCare Link eliminates the need to call or fax a referral order.
- If you have questions about placing a referral in EpicCare Link, contact your liaison for a tip sheet.
- To sign up for EpicCare Link, call 330-543-6248 or email epiccarelink@akronchildrens.org.



For those not using EpicCare Link, submit referrals to the Appointment Center:

1. By phone: 330-543-2778.
2. By fax: 330-543-6071.
3. Online: Complete the Ambulatory Referral Order at akronchildrens.org/referral and click 'Send Request' to submit a referral online.
4. Note: For direct, streamlined referrals, sign up for EpicCare Link by calling 330-543-6248 or emailing epiccarelink@akronchildrens.org for assistance.

For Admissions/Emergencies: Call 800-221-5437 to arrange an admission or transport.

For COVID-19 Questions/Concerns: Call our COVID-19 hotline at 330-543-COVD (2683).

COVID-19 Testing

At the present time, the Akron Children's Hospital laboratory still cannot accept referrals for COVID-19 testing from outside our system. Testing capacity remains limited. Inpatients, staff and preop/pre-procedure patients are prioritized, while testing of appropriate symptomatic individuals is also being done in our clinics, urgent care centers and emergency departments. We are working hard to expand capacity beyond these limits and will inform you when this policy changes. Commercial labs and other local options are available throughout the region for COVID-19 testing. Please do not hesitate to use those resources.

Physician Liaisons

Our physician liaison team is always available to help you and your practice with any questions or concerns you have about our health care system.

- Lori Carsey (East) 330-606-6657
- Susan Manly (North) 330-697-1666
- Lynn Matzules (South) 330-715-5690
- Pat Shallahamer (Central) 330-805-1764
- Jennifer Stuart (West) 330-543-3453

References

¹ <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinicalguidance/covid-19-testing-guidance/>

² *This has not been adopted universally by all companies, health departments and school districts. Like other companies, Akron Children's has taken the approach of having asymptomatic household contacts of people with pending COVID tests continue to come to work in some cases, based on essential job status, self-monitoring for symptoms and the significant efforts taken to prevent transmission within the health care setting environment. The CDC recommends quarantine for contacts of those with "lab confirmed or clinically compatible illness."*

³ <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system>

