

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
[July 31, 2020]

Health Department Announces New COVID-19 Testing Location at Alstom Plant

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department is excited to announce their new testing location at Alstom Plant, 1119 Riverfront Pkwy, Chattanooga, TN 37402. COVID-19 testing will begin Monday, August 3rd from 7-11AM and run daily through the end of September. The site is free and open to the public. No appointment necessary.

With school soon starting back, the Health Department will no longer use school sites for testing. The Health Department thanks Hamilton County Schools for the partnership that has allowed them to locate testing in locations central to our community.

In order for Health Department personnel to move all their equipment, the Brainerd High School testing site will not operate over the weekend. Instead, the Health Department will only have one testing site available this weekend at Orchard Knob Missionary Baptist Church, 1734 E 3rd St, Chattanooga, TN 37404, Saturday 10AM-1PM, Sunday 12PM-3PM. Additional staff will be present to handle more volume.

Testing

The Health Department has placed an enormous priority on community testing. Five months ago, no staff at the Health Department had a job description resembling drive-through testing. That the Department was able to stand up community testing to the volume that it has become involved a major commitment from all staff. Hundreds of people pass through the drive-through testing sites daily.

The Health Department receives numerous positive comments about how professional and efficient staff are. The Health Department would also like to thank the public who have entrusted them with their COVID-19 testing needs. This is truly an example of everyone working together.

Test Results and Turn-Around Time

The Health Department has been aware of the longer than desired turn-around time to get COVID-19 testing results. Moving forward, the results should now be available between 24-48 hours.

For those coming through drive-through testing sites who have access to the internet, they will be able to access their results through the lab portal as fast as the Health Department gets the results.

Tom Bodkin, Public Information Officer
TomB@HamiltonTN.gov

Cell: 423.315.3987
Desk: 423.209.8238

If a person tests positive, the Health Department will call them to conduct contact tracing. For those who test negative, the Health Department will follow up by mailing the results.

For those who do not have internet access, or need language assistance, then Health Department staff will continue to make individual phone calls with results. As always, if anyone has any problems or questions they can call the COVID-19 hotline at (423) 209-8383.

Retesting

The Health Department wants to encourage anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to not seek retesting for at least 3 months after their recovery, as long as they remain asymptomatic.

The Health Department also encourages employers to not request a negative test to return to work except for rare situations. A test-based “return-to-work” strategy is no longer recommended. A letter of release from isolation will be sent or given to patients by the Health Department. Employers are encouraged to use this documentation for return to work.

Active Case Definition

The Health Department receives many questions about the active case data point found on the COVID-19 data [webpage](#). When someone tests positive, a contact-tracing interview is conducted and the patient is placed in isolation. At that point, they become an “active” case. After they become well, which is usually 10 days if the last day is fever free, they are released from isolation and they are counted as “recovered.” This can cause large daily fluctuations in the “active” and “recovered” categories.

Mask Directive

The Health Department has received positive responses from the community about the mask directive. Staff observations show that compliance is moving in the right direction. Approximately 120 complaints about potential violations have been handled.

Typically, Health Department staff investigate these complaints by engaging employees, managers, and owners with COVID-19 education. Staff work to help the establishment overcome barriers to compliance. Free masks are given to the establishment. To date, the Health Department has given out over 300,000 free masks.

The Health Department is appreciative of the public for letting them know when and where they can take action. Call the COVID-19 hotline to report problems at (423) 209-8383.

Funerals and Weddings

The Health Department would like to clarify the wedding and funeral exemption in the [Hamilton County Directive No. 1](#). Only the actual wedding or funeral service is exempted as a religious service. All other

activities associated with these events, such as visitation, meeting with coordinators to make arrangements, rehearsal dinners, or any other preparation activities are not exempt.

As an example, funeral homes should require masks to be worn at all times in the building with the exception of the funeral service itself.

This Directive is meant to protect both the employees and the public who attend, while still allowing for a religious service without a mask if a person so chooses.

Hiring Staff

The Health Department continues to need additional staff for the COVID-19 response. Of particular need are RNs, LPNs, and Environmentalists.

Anyone with a passion for public health and who wishes to serve their community is encouraged to [apply](#).

Visit these additional Health Department COVID-19 resources:

- COVID-19 hotline: (423) 209-8383
- Website: <http://health.hamiltontn.org/>
- English Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonTNHealthDept/>
- Spanish Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN/>
- YouTube English: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCckF8VUBQFLiJoxh8Sk10mA>
- YouTube Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwHuLpBFuLOf6hDTCFbfyQ>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HamiltonHealth>