

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

June 4, 2020

COVID-19 Contact Tracing is a Vital Partnership between the Community and the Health Department

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – Contact tracing is the process of determining who has been exposed to an infected person. It is one of the primary tools of local health departments around the United States used to stop the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.

“Contact tracing is a tool that is old as public health itself,” said Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes, “but it works best as a partnership between public health workers and the citizens they are working to protect.”

Contact tracing begins as soon as a positive test result is reported to the Health Department.

In addition to calling the positive patient with their results, Health Department staff will interview the patient to trace their movements and contacts. The patient will be asked where and with whom they were in the two days prior to illness onset, or if asymptomatic, two days prior to being tested. This interview generates a list of names that contract tracers begin calling.

The Health Department requires positive patients to isolate at home and contacts to the patient to quarantine at home.

According to HIPAA privacy laws, the Health Department cannot reveal the name of the positive patient to the contacts who are being called. Contacts will be told that they have been in contact with a COVID-19 positive patient. A letter will be sent to the contact explaining their quarantine mobility restrictions.

For those who have been tested and are waiting on their results, they should expect a call from an unknown number in the days following their test. The Health Department will not leave tests results on voice mail, but rather will leave a voice mail that says to call the hotline at (423) 209-8383.

It is vitally important that persons getting tested at Health Department testing sites give their current, working telephone number. Some people have not gotten results because they can't be reached. Without this contact, more people could become infected.

The Health Department does not share data with law enforcement or other agencies. The patient's and contact's information are confidential.

It is through the partnership of contact tracing that citizens directly assist the Health Department in stopping the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone has an opportunity to do their part by social distancing, wearing a mask when in public and when it is difficult to social distance, staying at home except essential travel only, washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer, and isolating at home if you are sick.

The schedule of free Health Department testing sites can be found [here](#).

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