

# Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: [health.hamiltontn.org](http://health.hamiltontn.org)

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

September 22, 2020

## **A Brief History of Health Department COVID-19 Testing**

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department has offered free COVID-19 testing since April 3, 2020. Since that date, approximately 80,000 people have been tested at Health Department testing sites.

The Health Department has utilized several locations around the area as testing sites. Below is a list of sites and the dates of their operations:

Location	Dates of Operations
Emissions Testing Centers (2 sites)	April 3 – May 22
Hamilton County Schools (4 sites)	May 26 – July 31
Church Testing Sites (10 sites)	June 2 – August 30 (weekends)
Alstom Plant	August 3 - present

“We are proud to have offered free COVID-19 testing to our residents since the early days of the pandemic,” said Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes, “And we appreciate all the partners that have made our testing possible.”

The National Guard began partnering with the Health Department early in the pandemic. Light duty firefighters with the Chattanooga Fire Department began assisting in July. Most recently, the Chattanooga Area Food Bank added their services. Following specimen collection, patients in need of food assistance can drive by the Food Bank’s tent for a free food box.

The pandemic is not over. The Health Department continues to offer free testing and still urges anyone who is symptomatic or has had an exposure to get tested.

The testing process is streamlined for efficiency and safety. First, patients drive into the intake area where the tracking paperwork is begun. It is very important to give complete and reliable contact information so the Health Department can contact you if needed. Patients can retrieve their results online within a day or two.

Patients then pull forward into the testing area where the nasal swab is taken. Testing is now performed with a “shallow” nasal swab, meaning the cotton-tipped swab is only used just inside the opening of the nostrils.

Typically, the whole process takes approximately 10 minutes depending on the car line wait.

Free transportation is offered for those who need it and reservations may be made by calling the Health Department’s Informational Hotline at 423-209-8383.

Tom Bodkin, Public Information Officer  
[TomB@HamiltonTN.gov](mailto:TomB@HamiltonTN.gov)

Cell: 423.315.3987  
Desk: 423.209.8238

The Health Department provides Spanish language materials and interpreters/bilingual staff throughout the testing process.

For more information about COVID-19 and free Health Department testing, call the hotline at (423) 209-8383, or visit these Health Department resources:

- 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>
- Subscribe to the Mailing List: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/i6u3e5>