



Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

March 18 PM - JРАН Email

Dear JРАН Community:

I want to make sure that these emails are helpful and timely, therefore I will only send them when there is new information to share. If you have any specific questions that come up, please email me and I will do my best to answer one-on-one.

I have received several questions about testing for COVID-19. I want to take a moment to share the CDC's guidelines for testing, when we can expect public testing in Houston, and a word of caution for private testing sites.

The [CDC has set guidelines](#) for our hospital system and I wanted to share them so we all know what to expect. Harris County has a very limited number of test kits and is waiting on supplies for healthcare workers before they open public testing clinics. Until more test kits are made available and to limit the spread of COVID-19 within our hospitals, [individuals will only be tested if they show severe symptoms or are at higher risk for serious illness](#). Not all persons [exhibiting the signs of Coronavirus](#) will be tested. Instead, they will be asked to call their primary care physician, [treat their symptoms at home](#), and self-isolate. It is not medically necessary to get tested in order to treat your mild to moderate symptoms at home.

The City of Houston and Harris County have [not set a date](#) for the opening of public testing sites. At his press conference yesterday, the Mayor anticipated that sites will be up and running by Friday, but this is a fluid situation and may change. He indicated that the delay has been due to inability to procure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical staff.

Finally, there have been reports of private testing sites opening around the city. Because it is not medically necessary to get tested for COVID-19 in order to treat your symptoms and the [vast majority of infected persons show mild symptoms](#), there is no reason to rush to a private testing site. In fact, there may be more risk than reward. Some private testing sites are charging \$150 or more for the test, whereas if you get tested from a public hospital it might be covered by insurance, be free, or you will be charged a small fee. You can report price gouging to the [Harris County Attorney's office](#). There have been reports of private sites not wearing the correct PPE which may cause transferring of the virus. Private sites are also following guidelines from the CDC and will only test you with a doctor's referral.

If someone is showing signs of COVID-19, it is understandable that they will want a confirmation of the illness. Although it is not ideal, as community leaders we have the responsibility to calm our community's fears, help our neighbors, and care for the sick. If someone you know is sick, please do your best to ease their anxiety by giving them the resources they need to care for themselves at home. Check-in on them as they self-isolate, send encouraging messages to help them get through their illness, and offer to buy supplies

and medicine as they recover. Of course, if their symptoms worsen, they should call their doctor, the Houston Health Department (832-393-4220, M-F 9 am – 7 pm), or, for severe cases, 9-1-1.

Please keep sending me your community needs during this uncertain time.

Take care, keep calm, and reach out to one another,
Jackie

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