



Public Information Release

COVID-19 Update: Counting Multiple Tests

July 28, 2020

During the COVID-19 pandemic information has been used as both a tool and a weapon. Since the first case appeared in Madison County in March, Madison County Public Health has encouraged all residents to consider the sources of information about COVID-19. Madison County Public Health has faithfully served the community for 102 years without the slant of political bias. Recently MCPH, as well as many other local health departments, has been asked questions about the impact on the county's total case count of repeated positive tests for the same person. The first time a person tests positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 illness, one case is added to the county total. If this same person seeks follow up testing and tests positive again, the total case count does not increase. Every follow up test the person has is linked to that original case; follow up tests are not counted as additional cases. MCPH reports dozens of diseases every day beside COVID-19; diseases such as Syphilis, Lyme disease, and Salmonella are just a few of these illnesses. MCPH counts all infectious and communicable diseases in the same manner.

The Ohio Disease Reporting System (ODRS) is used by every local health department in Ohio to track all reportable diseases. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) accesses the data in this system to report statewide cases and trends on all types of diseases. When cases are entered into ODRS, they are entered with patient identifiers such as names and birthdates. Additionally each person receives a unique identification number similar to a unique patient ID at your doctor. If a person gets tested for any disease the ODRS system searches for existing entries. A repeat test for the same person is not entered as a new case if there is an existing case. As an additional verification step, the ODH Bureau of Infectious Diseases also completes a de-duplication analysis before any data becomes official.

Positive cases are required to isolate at home. Based on new CDC guidelines, MCPH now releases people from isolation using a symptom and time-based strategy. People with mild to moderate illness (non-hospitalized cases) are released from isolation when all three of the following criteria are met:

1. Ten days have passed since the onset of symptoms, AND
2. The person has no fever the last day of isolation (without the use of medications), AND
3. All other symptoms have improved.

Quarantine procedures remain unchanged. If a person is exposed to a COVID-19 case, he or she must quarantine at home for fourteen (14) days following the most recent exposure to the case.

For daily updates and up-to-date information on how COVID-19 has spread in Madison County, visit covid.madisonph.org.

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