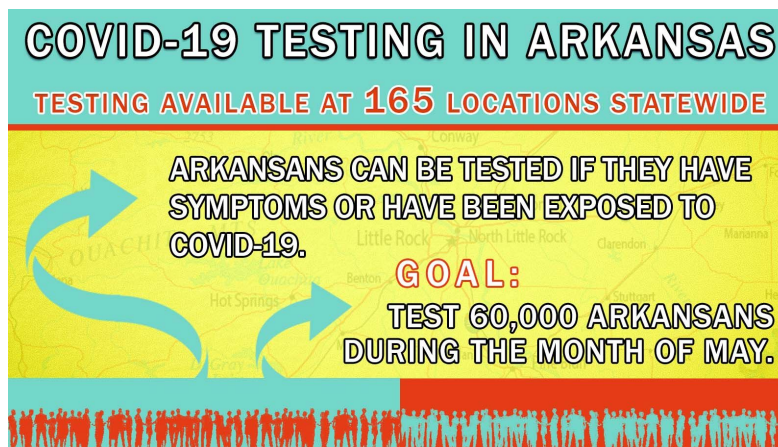




Arkansas House Newsletter

May 8, 2020

Increased Testing in Arkansas



Since the beginning of this health emergency, more than 60,000 tests for COVID-19 have been processed in Arkansas.

While testing was initially limited, the capacity at commercial labs has increased significantly resulting in shortened turnaround times.

Earlier this week, the CDC committed to providing 90,000 kits and swabs per month to the State of Arkansas. The goal is to now test 60,000 in Arkansas during the month of May.

If you have symptoms such as a fever, cough, or shortness of breath OR if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 call ahead to your health care provider. Testing is available.

People who are considered high risk should contact their health care provider early, even if symptoms are mild. Those at higher risk for serious illness include older adults and people with underlying chronic medical conditions.

There are now 165 testing locations in 56 counties. You can find one near you at www.healthy.arkansas.gov

or call your health provider.

Increased testing is critical to preventing the spread of the virus. It also plays an important role in making decisions to re-open businesses and roll back restrictions.

Early testing can help identify anyone who came in contact with an infected person so they too can be treated quickly.

As more testing becomes available, the Arkansas Department of Health is also expanding the number of health experts working on contact tracing.

Contact tracing is part of the process of supporting patients with suspected or confirmed infection. In contact tracing, public health staff works with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious.

Public health staff then warn these exposed individuals of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible.

The Arkansas Department of Health currently has close to 200 individuals working on case investigation and contact tracing. They include nurses, disease intervention specialists, epidemiologists, and ADH trained staff.

There are more than 125 student volunteers with the College of Public Health being trained to assist with contact tracing in the next few weeks.

While testing and tracing are key components to re-opening our economy, every Arkansan can play a significant role as well. We should continue to practice social distancing and wear a mask in public places.