



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New COVID-19 Testing Site Coming to Wyandotte County

Public Health Department moves testing to former Kmart location on October 19

Beginning on October 19, the Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) will be moving its COVID-19 testing site from the current Ann Avenue site to the former Kmart location at 7836 State Avenue in Kansas City, KS.

Testing hours at the new facility will be the same as at the Ann Avenue facility: Monday-Friday, 9 AM – 3 PM. As at the Ann Avenue facility, testing is available for people who live or work in Wyandotte County, with or without symptoms or exposure to COVID-19.

“COVID testing remains a critical priority, with results helping guide how we best continue moving forward,” said Mayor David Alvey. “Ensuring convenient, accessible testing for residents throughout our entire community is also important, which the Health Department’s new permanent testing facility along with neighborhood ‘pop-up’ testing sites will continue to provide. Moreover, with free COVID testing now available to anyone who lives or works in Wyandotte County regardless of symptoms or exposure, winter weather just around the corner, and seasonal flu shots being made available in coming weeks, the new expanded testing site facility and location is intended to provide for faster, safer, and more convenient options.”

COVID-19 testing at the Ann Avenue location will no longer be available, allowing the UGPHD to resume services that had been temporarily cut back or put on hold due to the pandemic. Monthly pop-up COVID-19 testing sites will continue throughout Wyandotte County. To view a list of these sites, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19. These pop-up testing events are provided by the Wyandotte County Health Equity Task Force, in partnership with Vibrant Health and Swope Health.

“Transitioning our testing operations to the former Kmart location at 78th and State Avenue has several benefits,” said Juliann Van Liew, Director of the Unified Government Public Health Department. “The new location provides us a space to effectively provide testing during the winter months. It can accommodate more traffic than our Ann Avenue site, regardless of whether people are arriving by car, public transit, or on foot. It also gives us space to provide flu shots for our community on a larger scale, and eventually to deliver a COVID-19 vaccine should one become available.”

“One of the most important reasons for us to move our testing site is to resume more of our usual services,” said Van Liew. “While we’ve been able to offer some services remotely, such as WIC and home visiting, unfortunately we’ve had to reduce or temporarily suspend some services in order to administer COVID-19 testing at our site. Holding the testing at another location frees up our space and allows us to increase our service hours for a number of our clinical services, such as STI testing and treatment, family planning, laboratory testing, and immunizations.”

The new testing location has multiple benefits, including:

- Centralized location within Wyandotte County
- Ability to accommodate greater testing demand and volume as needed
- Access to a warm, indoor location for testing during winter months, that also provides ample space for adequate social distancing between patients and staff
- Greater access for motorists, pedestrians, and those using public transportation
- The new location has a large, dedicated parking lot, meaning there will be separate access areas for people who are arriving by car versus pedestrians, meaning safer access to the facility for everyone.

Services such as STI testing and treatment, family planning, laboratory testing and immunizations will be available by appointment only. For appointments, call 913-573-8855. Some services will continue to be provided remotely, including WIC and Healthy Families Wyandotte home visiting.

Who can get tested?

COVID-19 testing is free to anyone who lives or works in Wyandotte County regardless of symptoms or exposure. If you do not have symptoms or have not been exposed to COVID-19, you can receive a free test at any time.

The UGPHD recommends that people come in for testing within 48 hours of their symptoms starting for the best results. Even if it has been longer than 48 hours, the UGPHD still strongly recommends that you get tested. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Wheezing
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rash
- Fatigue
- New loss of taste or smell

The Board of Public Utilities will provide the new testing location with water and electricity needs to support both increased free testing and free flu vaccine distribution.

“As our community continues to grapple with surges in COVID-19 cases, a persistent message has emerged from public health officials: it's vital to get the flu vaccine this year,” said Bill Johnson, Kansas City Board of Public Utilities General Manager. “The flu vaccine is more important than ever this year in light of the pandemic. If we can prevent influenza and reduce severity of illness through vaccinations, it's a strategy to alleviate stress on our health systems.”

Free Flu Shots Coming Soon!

In the coming weeks, the UGPHD will begin offering free flu shots at the new testing facility for people who live or work in Wyandotte County.

Free flu vaccinations are supported by funding provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act. The UGPHD strongly encourages everyone to get a flu shot this year.

Both COVID-19 and the flu share some symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. In addition, both COVID-19 and the flu can cause severe illness in some people. Protecting yourself against the flu this year is especially important, as it helps Wyandotte County prevent health systems,

such as hospitals, from being overwhelmed by both COVID-19 and flu patients who may be experiencing severe or life-threatening issues.

“Getting a flu shot isn’t just a good personal health decision, it’s also especially important this year as a way to combat the negative impact of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County,” said Dr. Allen Greiner, UGPHD Chief Medical Officer. “Flu vaccines won’t prevent COVID-19, but they will reduce the burden of flu illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths on our regional health care system. This will help conserve precious medical resources for the care of people with COVID-19. As a community, we need to do everything we can to ensure that local hospitals are not overwhelmed by patients this season.”

The UGPHD will announce free flu vaccinations when they are available in the coming weeks.

Please note: flu shots are not recommended for individuals who currently have a fever. People who are asymptomatic or who have symptoms other than fever will be eligible to get a flu shot.

To learn more about COVID-19 and the County’s response, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19 or call 3-1-1.

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