



Sept. 10, 2020

Riverside County  
**NEWS RELEASE**

**Media contact:**

Riverside County Joint Information Center  
951-955-5087

**Public contact:** 2-1-1

## **More residents needed for COVID testing to slow the spread, move into red tier**

Riverside County residents are needed for coronavirus testing to continue to help slow the spread of coronavirus, as well as help the county emerge from the state's most restrictive purple tier.

Coronavirus tests for active infections slows the spread of the disease by identifying infected individuals who can then be isolated as well as their close contacts. This process disrupts the disease, slows the spread of the disease and preserves space in our acute care hospitals.

In addition, increased testing supports moving into the next level of the state's reopening plan (red tier) that will allow more businesses, as well as schools and places of worship to reopen indoors.

The county is currently designated for the purple tier, where the COVID-19 virus is considered widespread. Based on the state's criteria, increased testing will result in a lower case rate, allowing the move to the red tier where the virus spread is considered substantial. Counties are placed within tiers because of their daily case rate (must be lower than seven new cases per 100,000 population) and positivity rate (lower than eight percent).

Riverside County reached the positivity rate that will allow it to move to the red tier (7.8 percent), but the case rate remains higher than the state's requirement. This week, the state

began adjusting the case rate higher for counties that are not meeting the state's daily average testing volume, which brought Riverside County's case rate from 7.4 to 8.6.

While Riverside County has the volume to test 4,000 people a day, only half that number have been getting tested at county and state testing sites in recent weeks. Health officials believe this is partly due to more private providers offering antigen and antibody testing, which is not calculated in the state's testing metric for active infections.

"We've made a lot of progress in slowing the spread of the disease and we want residents to know that more testing will help us continue to disrupt the spread of the virus," said Kim Saruwatari, director of the Riverside University Health System - Public Health. "At the beginning of the pandemic Riverside County led the state in per capita testing. We need to pick up our testing again – for both the purpose of isolating the sick and to help us safely reopen more parts of our community."

Saruwatari said those with and without symptoms are encouraged to get tested, as well as younger people who traditionally have not gotten screened at the same rate as other groups.

"Testing is for everyone, regardless of immigration status or insurance, available for anyone with or without symptoms, and it is free," said Riverside County Board Chair and Fourth District Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. "By getting tested, you are helping keep your family and our community healthy."

There are 13 testing sites spread throughout Riverside County, both walk-in and drive-up services. To find locations and make an appointment, go online to [gettested.ruhealth.org](https://gettested.ruhealth.org).

# # #