



Why is it So Difficult to Get Free COVID-19 Testing in Montgomery County?

Status Update from the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY – Montgomery County Public Health District, in conjunction with Montgomery County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, would like to clarify a frequently asked question we receive from residents and a frustration we share with all of you regarding the lack of free COVID-19 testing in Montgomery County.

On the week of March 8th, Montgomery County Public Health District entered a STAR Request (the process required to order emergency supplies from the State of Texas) for 1000 COVID-19 test kits. After some delay, the Public Health District received six COVID-19 test kits. Likewise, the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management entered a STAR Request for COVID-19 test kits and was told that the State of Texas would consider sending the test kits... in August.

Next, the major hospital systems in the greater Houston Area decided they would combine their resources and set up free testing sites in Houston and the surrounding counties. Unfortunately, they too never received enough test kit resources to be able to provide free test sites in the areas outside the greater Houston Area. SETRAC (Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council) was finally able to get some test kit resources from the State of Texas stockpile and, along with the larger Houston-area hospital systems, set up a free testing center located at Butler Stadium in Southwest Houston. **Please note that this is the primary free testing area for all interested residents of Southeast Texas.** You can go to this site if you wish to be tested for free.

The Montgomery County Public Health District and Montgomery County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management have reached out to all the major healthcare suppliers since March 16th and have been told the test kits are on backorder. To date, neither MCPHD nor MCOHSEM have received none of the kits they have ordered.

Now, testing kits sourced internationally are being purchased at a price of \$30 to \$60 per kit. Individual healthcare agencies who are charging for COVID-19 screening, must cover the cost of the test, the cost of the laboratory procedure that determines the test results, and the cost of the physician who screens the patient.

The free screening and testing site for the greater Houston Area is in Houston at Butler Stadium. We know this is frustrating for residents of Montgomery County, and we share your frustration. We will continue to try and secure additional tests for our residents.

In the meantime, if you would like to be tested, please call the MCHD/MCPHD COVID-19 Hotline at 936-523-5040. Many of the testing centers available in Montgomery County are offered through

insurance with no co-pays. For insured patients, some testing sites are offering lower-cost options. Our staff will work with you to find a testing center in our area.

Montgomery County Public Health District's mission is promoting a healthy, resilient community through health education, disease prevention, clinical services, and emergency preparedness. For more information about the Montgomery County Public Health District please go to www.mcphd-tx.org.

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