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Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

Kristina Box, MD, FACOG
State Health Commissioner



IUPUI

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STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT, IU PARTNER ON COVID-19 STUDY

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is collaborating with the Indiana University Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at IUPUI to conduct a scientific study to measure the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state.

The closely monitored study will include random sample testing for SARS-CoV-2 viral infections and antibodies in Hoosiers.

ISDH and IU will perform scientifically valid random sampling of Hoosiers in tests conducted in four phases during the next year, beginning Saturday. In total, at least 20,000 Hoosiers will be tested for the study. Select members of the public are being asked to participate by invitation only to ensure that the sampling is representative of the population.

The scientific study will enable the state to take a critical step forward in understanding how COVID-19 is affecting Hoosiers.

“Data is key in guiding our response in the fight against COVID-19, and our partnership with Fairbanks School of Public Health researchers will provide high-quality information to help shape our decision making,” Governor Eric J. Holcomb said. “I want to encourage Hoosiers who are selected to participate to step forward and help us gather the critical information for this groundbreaking scientific study.”

The first round of testing will begin this weekend with a pool of at least 5,000 Hoosiers randomly selected from across Indiana’s 10 emergency preparedness districts. The study will include conducting both nasopharyngeal swabs and blood draws. Nasopharyngeal swabs will be tested for COVID-19 within 72 to 96 hours, while the blood samples will be tested at a later date for antibodies to determine if an individual has had COVID-19 in the past.

Indiana University Health and Eli Lilly and Co. will process nasal samples and report them back to ISDH. Participants can choose the method by which they receive their results when they

register. Registration and delivery of results will be managed by Indianapolis-based Zotec Partners.

Additional phases of testing will take place in late May, in October 2020 and in April 2021.

Led by the Fairbanks School of Public Health, an interdisciplinary team of IU scientists, physicians and epidemiologists has designed the study and developed the scientific plan for execution by state agencies. The IU team will also analyze the study results and provide scientific interpretations of the data to the state.

“This is a critical step toward understanding how COVID-19 has affected the population of Indiana,” said Nir Menachemi, professor and Fairbanks Endowed Chair in the Fairbanks School of Public Health and principal investigator on the study. “Our results will contribute valuable information to the complex considerations necessary for relaxing the stay-at-home order and other social-distancing policies.”

State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG, said the study is key to understanding the impact of the virus among Hoosiers.

“Having the ability to not only test for the presence of this virus, but also to learn more about people who have been exposed in the past and might have antibodies that indicate past infection, will help us fine-tune our work to keep Hoosiers safe from this pandemic,” Dr. Box said. “We are grateful that this partnership will help make that happen.”

Participants will be notified of their eligibility for the study by mail, text message, email or phone and will be directed to the testing site closest to their residence. Registrants will receive a unique code that they will show at the testing site as proof of participation.

Testing for the study will be conducted at 8 fixed and 10 mobile sites around the state from Saturday through Wednesday. Additional sampling may be added later depending on initial participation levels.

Support for the testing operation is being provided by the Indiana National Guard, Indiana Department of Transportation, state Emergency Medical Services personnel and other state and private partners.

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