

**CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)  
SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR SPECIMENS SENT TO THE OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES ONLY**

**NOTE: Before collecting and handling specimens for COVID-19 testing, it must be determined whether the person meets the current DHHR/BPH testing criteria. All suspect COVID-19 cases must be evaluated and approved for testing by the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) prior to submission to the Office of Laboratory Services. Please call (304) 558-5358, extension 1 for consultation.**

## **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

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Healthcare personnel collecting specimens from patients with known or suspected COVID-19 should adhere to Standard, Contact, and Airborne Precautions. This includes use of N-95 or higher-level respirator (or facemask if respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves, and a disposable gown. The number of healthcare professionals present during the collection procedures should be limited to only those essential for patient care. Collection of diagnostic respiratory specimens (such as nasopharyngeal) can be performed in a normal examination room with the door closed.

## **SPECIMEN COLLECTION**

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For initial diagnostic testing, CDC recommends collecting and testing upper respiratory nasopharyngeal specimens. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset.

### **Nasopharyngeal (NP)**

- Label a viral transport media tube with the patient's name or other unique identifier and date of collection.
- Immobilize the patient's head and insert the swab into the nasopharynx and leave in place for 10 seconds to absorb secretions. Slightly rotate swab as it is being removed from patient.  
*NOTE: Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic or aluminum shafts. Do not use cotton or calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.*
- Place swab immediately into labeled viral transport media tube, break swab at breakpoint, and close lid tightly.
- Refrigerate at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours and ship on cold packs. If the specimen cannot be shipped and received at OLS within 72 hours of collection, freeze the specimen at -70°C or less and ship on dry ice.

## **SPECIMEN TRANSPORT**

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- Specimens from suspect COVID-19 cases must be packaged, shipped, and transported as Category B Biological Substances according to the current edition of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations 1.5 and 49CFR Section 172.0700 [U.S. Department of Transportation].
- Specimens must be stored at 2-8°C and shipped on cold packs. If samples are unable to be shipped and received at OLS within 72 hours of collection, they must be stored at -70°C or less and shipped on dry ice.
- All specimens must be packed to prevent breakage and spillage. Specimen containers should be sealed with Parafilm® (or equivalent adhesive) and placed in plastic zippered bags. Place enough absorbent material to absorb

the entire contents of the Secondary Container (containing Primary Container) and separate the Primary Containers (containing specimen) to prevent breakage.

- Specimens being shipped with cold packs or other refrigerant and must be self-contained, not actual wet ice.
- Do not place any dry ice in the "Primary Container", "Secondary Container", foam envelopes, plastic zippered bags, cryovial boxes, or hermetically sealed containers.
- Do not allow specimen submission form or other paperwork come in direct contact with the primary specimen container.

## OTHER INFORMATION

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1. Ensure that specimen is properly labeled with the patient name or unique identifier and the date of collection and that the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Specimen Submission Form is completed entirely. Submission form MUST include the PUI#. The patient name or unique identifier on the form and collection container must be identical.
2. Do not delay shipment. Ship as soon after collection as possible. It is recommended to use overnight or next day shipping.
3. If specimen needs shipped on Friday, shipper must coordinate with the Office of Laboratory Services to ensure pickup as OLS does not receive regularly scheduled weekend deliveries. Shipping courier must be FedEx.
4. Do not ship specimens on Saturdays.
5. Specimens must be received at OLS within 72 hours of collection. If shipping is delayed, specimens must be frozen and shipped on dry ice.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office of Laboratory Services  
PH | 304-558-3530  
FX | 304-558-3530

Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services  
Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology  
PH | 304-558-5358  
FX | 304-558-8736

## REFERENCES

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention --- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/index.html>

Office of Laboratory Services --- <https://dhhr.wv.gov/ols/labs/Pages/EmergingPathogens.aspx>

WV DHHR --- [coronavirus.wv.gov](https://coronavirus.wv.gov)

“Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)” - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>.

“Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings” - [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html).