

**CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)
SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

FOR OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES SPECIMENS ONLY
[FOR 60 OR MORE SPECIMENS ONLY]

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

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

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

The following VTM/UTM can be used (must be 3mL):

- Remel MicroTest M4, M4RT, M5, or M6
- Copan Universal Transport Medium
- BD Universal Viral Transport Medium

NOTE: flat-bottom collection tubes are preferred over conical tubes; conical collection tubes will add additional processing time and delay resulting.

NOTE: Prime Store Molecular Transport Media (MTM) or any media containing guanidine thiocyanate cannot be used as a transport media. Samples using MTM as the transport media will be rejected and not tested.

The following swabs can be used:

- Polyester
- Rayon
- Nylon
- Dacron

Collecting Nasopharyngeal (NP) Specimens

- 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.
- Place swab immediately into labeled viral transport media tube, break swab at breakpoint, and close lid tightly.

- Complete the COVID-19 OLS submission form (the name on the collection tube MUST exactly match the name on the submission form), fold and insert in the outside pocket of the provided bio-hazard specimen bag. Insert collected specimen in the biohazard bag and use zip seal to close the bag.
- After collection, bio-hazard bags containing specimens collected in VTM/UTM must be stored at 2°C to 8°C until delivered or shipped to the laboratory.
- If specimens are unable to reach OLS within 72 hours of collection, they must be frozen and shipped on dry ice.

SPECIMEN TRANSPORT

Specimens to be delivered directly to OLS by courier:

- Transport bags will be provided to contain the smaller bio-hazard specimen bags. Frozen icepacks should be added to the transport bag or the transport bag can be placed into a cooler to keep specimens at the appropriate temperature until the specimens are received at the lab.
- If samples are unable to be received at OLS within 72 hours of collection, they must be frozen, stored at -70°C or less, and delivered on dry ice.

Specimens shipped to OLS:

- 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].
- If a site plans to ship sixty or more specimens from one event to OLS, contact the lab for further instructions.

OTHER INFORMATION

- 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 outbreak number.
- The patient name or unique identifier on the form and collection container must be identical.
- Do not delay delivery of specimens. Specimens should be delivered to OLS as soon as possible after collection!
- Delivery of samples must be coordinated with the Office of Laboratory Services (see contact information below).
- Specimens must be received at OLS within 72 hours of collection. If delivery is delayed, specimens must be frozen at -70°C or less and delivered on dry ice.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office of Laboratory Services

PH | 304-558-3530

FX | 304-558-2006

www.dhhr.wv.gov/ols

Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services

PH | 304-558-5358

FX | 304-558-8736

www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps

REFERENCES

- 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
- Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for COVID-19 --- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>