



DATE:	1/31/2020
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Updated Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Collection and Shipping Guidance
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory”: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) is releasing the collection and shipping guidance, “**Updated Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Collection and Shipping Guidance**”. If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please call the BOL at 610-280-3464.

- Health care providers must contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) (1-877- PA- HEALTH) or their local health department immediately to notify them of patients under investigation (PUI) for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).
- Local and state public health staff will determine if the patient meets the [criteria for a patient under investigation \(PUI\)](#) for 2019 n-CoV.
- Clinical specimens should be collected from PUIs for routine testing of respiratory pathogens at either clinical or public health labs.
- Testing at the PA DOH Bureau of Laboratories and/or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) must be approved by PA DOH Bureau of Epidemiology.
- Specimens cannot be sent to CDC until a CDC nCoV ID number has been issued and the “Interim 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019 n-CoV) PUI form” has been completed
- Please report any suspected cases of the **2019 novel Coronavirus** by calling DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

Specimen Type - Collection of three specimen types, lower respiratory, upper respiratory and serum, is recommended. If possible, collect two sets of samples: one for respiratory panel testing, and one for novel coronavirus testing unless respiratory samples have previously been collected.

If possible, additional specimen types (e.g., stool, urine) should be collected and need be stored initially until decision is made by CDC whether additional specimens need be tested. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of symptom onset. Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens.

A. Lower respiratory tract – collect two if possible

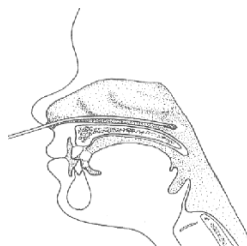
1. Bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate - collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.
2. Sputum - have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

B. Upper respiratory tract Nasopharyngeal swab (NP) AND oropharyngeal swab (OP)

Collect two NP and two OP if possible. Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. Place swabs immediately into sterile tubes containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media. NP and OP specimens should be kept in separate vials.

1. Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab - see diagram below

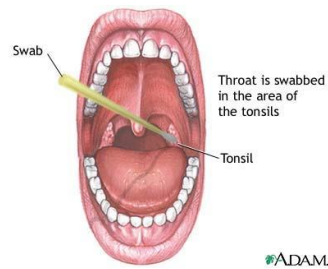
- a. Pass the NP swab through the nares.
- b. Resistance will be met, and this will confirm contact with the nasopharynx.
- c. Rub the swab tip several times across the mucosal surface. This will loosen and collect cellular material.
- d. Allow a time of contact of up to 30 seconds.
- e. Withdraw the swab and place in the viral transport media (VTM or UTM). Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip.
- f. Break or cut the end of the swab and screw the vial lid on tightly.



2. Oropharyngeal (OP) - see diagram

- a. Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.
- b. Using plastic handled swab, vigorously swab both the tonsils and the posterior pharynx.
- c. Place swab into the transport media. Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip.
- d. Break or cut the end of the swab.

- e. Screw the vial lid on tightly.



3. Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate (optional)

Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

C. Serum

Minimum volume required:

Children and adults: Collect 1 tube (5-10 mL) of whole blood in a serum separator tube.

Infant: A minimum of 1 mL of whole blood is needed for testing pediatric patients. If possible, collect 1 mL in a serum separator tube.

Serum separator tubes should be stored upright for at least 30 minutes, and then centrifuged at 1000–1300 relative centrifugal force (RCF) for 10 minutes before removing the serum and placing it in a separate sterile tube, e.g. cryovial, for shipping.

Submission Forms

1. BOL submission form
2. CDC 50.34 document travel history and onset date

Packaging Instructions

1. Label the container with patient's name, DOB, source and the collection date.
2. This information must appear on **BOTH** the specimen and the specimen submission form or testing will **NOT** be performed.
3. Place the biohazard bag containing the specimen into the foam box.
4. Add the **FROZEN** cold pack and close the foam box.
5. Place foam box into the cardboard mailer.
6. Close the outer mailer and seal it with tape.

Shipping Instructions

1. **If approved, shipping instructions will be provided by the BOL with consultation.**
2. **Refrigerate specimens if they will not be shipped immediately. Specimen MUST be kept cold until it reaches the laboratory.**
3. **Package the specimen according to Category B, diagnostic specimen, regulations.**
4. **Address the package:**

**PA Department of Health
Bureau of Laboratories
110 Pickering Way
Exton, PA 19341**

For questions: Contact Lisa Dettinger (ldettinger@pa.gov) or Maria Strohecker (mstrohecke@pa.gov) Bureau of Laboratories 610-280-3464

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Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of January 31, 2020, but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.