

COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Submission Instructions



<p>Pre-Approval Requirement</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">***PREAPPROVAL REQUIRED***</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department (https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/) to ensure patient meets Person Under Investigation (PUI) criteria for testing and to obtain Epidemiologist (Epi) approval and PUI ID to test. Specimens MUST meet PUI criteria for testing prior to shipping and WILL NOT be tested without prior approval. • Complete the CDC COVID-19 PUI and Case Report Form. For the most current version of the PUI form, please visit the DSHS COVID-19 website (https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/) under "Information for: Public Health". • All REQUIRED items on the G-2V submission form(s) must be completed prior to testing. See additional details under "Specimen Shipping" section.
<p>Testing Criteria</p>	<p>Please refer to the guidance in the following link https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ under "Information for Public Health".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DSHS Testing Algorithm ○ DSHS Criteria to Guide Testing of PUIs for COVID-19 ○ CDC COVID-19 PUI and Case Report Form <p>The decision to test a patient is appropriately made by the patient's attending healthcare provider in consultation with public health. Specimens from individuals who meet the Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) will be prioritized for testing based on resources. If resources at DSHS are at capacity, specimens meeting testing criteria may be forwarded to other public health laboratories or CDC for testing.</p>
<p>Specimen Types</p>	<p>To increase the likelihood of detecting infection, CDC recommends collecting and testing of upper respiratory (Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab AND Oropharyngeal (OP) swab- [preferred]) and lower respiratory (sputum, if possible) for patients with productive cough.</p> <p>DO NOT send additional specimen types (serum, urine, etc.) to the DSHS Laboratory. Please only send upper and lower respiratory specimens.</p>
<p>Specimen Collection and Handling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specimens should be collected as soon as possible after onset of illness, preferably within the first 3-4 days. Although some viruses may be detected after longer time periods, the likelihood of recovering most respiratory viruses diminishes after 3-4 days. • Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens. Guidance can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html#a4 • All specimens must be labeled with at least two patient specific identifiers (e.g. PUI's name [First and Last] and date of birth). The identifiers must appear on both the primary specimen container and the associated G-2V submission form. Please see the specimen identification guidelines at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/mrs_specimens.shtm#Label for additional details and acceptable patient identifiers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the patient's name and other approved identifiers on the form exactly match what is written on the specimen tube. • Each specimen container must be labeled as to type (e.g. Nasopharyngeal swab, Oropharyngeal swab, etc.)

Specimen Collection and Handling (continued)	<p><u>Upper respiratory tract</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect both an NP swab and an OP swab. • 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 MUST BE KEPT IN SEPARATE TUBES. • Collection Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Swab both nasopharyngeal areas with the same swab. ○ Oropharyngeal swab (e.g., throat swab): Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue. <p><u>Lower respiratory tract</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Refrigerate all specimens at 2-8°C promptly after collection and ship overnight to DSHS on ice packs. If specimens will not arrive to DSHS within 72 hours of collection, they should be stored frozen at -70°C and shipped on dry ice.</p>
Specimen Shipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport specimens to the laboratory as soon as possible. • If shipping specimens through a courier, specimens may be shipped Monday-Thursday for receipt at the DSHS Laboratory Tuesday-Friday. Weekend delivery will be considered on a case by case basis and requires PRE-APPROVAL by DSHS. Please contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department to initiate the weekend approval process. • Complete a <i>DSHS G-2V Virology Specimen Submission Form</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A separate G-2V is required for each specimen (NP swab, OP swab, etc.) submitted. ○ A submitter ID is required to submit specimens. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To request a submitter ID, please complete the <i>Submitter Identification (ID) Number Request Form</i> available at www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/MRS_forms.shtml#Microbiological and follow the instructions for submitting the form. ▪ Please include an email address in section 3 of the <i>Submitter ID Request Form</i> for a faster response. ○ Section 2: Patient Information. Under “Medical Record #/Alien #/CUI”, Please list the assigned PUI ID number (e.g. TX-Year-Month-Date-Number, TX202002020002) ○ Section 4: Virology, select “Other” and write in “COVID-19”. ○ Section 6 of the G-2V For Payor Source: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please mark “IDEAS” as the Payor Source
Specimen Shipping Continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the G-2V form on the outside of the styrofoam container but inside the cardboard shipper. This will enable the laboratory to easily identify the specimens as COVID-19 specimens. • Follow international Air Transportation Regulations for shipping of Category “B” Biological Substances. Infectious Subs. brochure - PHMSA • Specimens submitted without the proper DSHS form and/or complete information may be delayed. • Ship to the physical address: TX DSHS Laboratory Services, ATTN: Walter Douglass 512-776-7569, 1100 W. 49th Street, Austin TX, 78756 • Record the shipping tracking number and notify your Regional and/or Local Health Department and DSHS that a specimen is being shipped.

Results Reporting and Additional Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per the DSHS Testing Algorithm, the Regional and/or Local Health Department will notify the healthcare facilities or personnel of test results. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The most current version of the DSHS Testing Algorithm may be found at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ under “Information for Public Health” • Laboratory results will also be mailed to the submitter unless the submitter has requested reports via fax. • To obtain reports by fax, please use the <i>Submitter Identification (ID) Number Request Form</i> found at www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/mrs_forms.shtm and follow the instructions to update your preferred method for delivery of test results. • For other laboratory-related questions, please email LabInfo@dshs.texas.gov or call (512) 776-7578. • General information and updates about the ongoing COVID-19 Outbreak may be found here https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/
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