



## DCHHS Submission Instructions for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) PCR Testing

*Interim Guidance updated as of March 13, 2020*

### Criteria for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Testing Approval

- Per the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), as of 3/4/20, all public health laboratories in Texas will continue to use the CDC PUI criteria<sup>1</sup> below posted on February 27, 2020 to prioritize testing of persons at higher risk for COVID-19: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2020/han00428.asp>

Texas DSHS Criteria for Testing (as of 3/11/20)		
Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	<b>AND</b>	Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	<b>AND</b>	A history of travel from <a href="#">affected geographic areas</a> within 14 days of symptom onset <b>OR</b> An individual(s) with risk factors that put them at higher risk or poor outcomes
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	<b>AND</b>	No source of exposure has been identified and other causes of respiratory illness have been ruled out (e.g., influenza)

- To discuss testing of patients who **reside in Dallas County**, clinicians should contact the DCHHS Epidemiology division at 214-819-2004 during business hours or (877) 605-2660 after hours and complete the required [DCHHS Novel Coronavirus Test Request Form](#). For patients who **reside outside of Dallas County**, submitter must obtain approval for testing from the appropriate county/state health department<sup>3</sup> prior to submission to DCHHS.
- The DCHHS LRN Laboratory can only accept specimens for novel coronavirus PCR testing from residents of the following counties comprising its service area: **Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Henderson, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, Rains, Rockwall, and Van Zandt**.

### Specimen Collection Instructions:

For initial diagnostic testing for COVID-19, the CDC recommends collecting the following specimen<sup>4</sup>:

#### **Upper Respiratory Tract:**

- Nasopharyngeal swab** (NP swab)
  - Use only a synthetic fiber swab with a plastic shaft. Do not use a calcium alginate swab or swab with a wooden shaft, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. Place swab immediately into a sterile tube containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media. Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and ship on ice packs.
    - Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions.

**[Whole blood, serum, urine, and stool will NOT be accepted.]**

<sup>1</sup>CDC. Updated and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of COVID-19: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2020/han00428.asp>

<sup>2</sup>CDC. Evaluating and Reporting PUIs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>

<sup>3</sup>DSHS Texas Local Public Health Organizations: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/Regions/lhds.shtm>

<sup>4</sup>CDC. Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from PUIs for COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>



## DALLAS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Laboratory Response Network

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#### **Criteria for Specimen Handling**

- **Specimen MUST be labeled with the following information:**
  1. Patient's Full Name
  2. Patient's Medical Record Number (MRN)
  3. Patient's date of birth (DOB)
  4. Specimen Type (e.g. NP)
  5. Date of Specimen Collection
- **A specimen that is not appropriately labeled will NOT be accepted for testing.**
- Specimen should be double-bagged in a biohazard bag (one bag per patient) and must be accompanied by a completed printed copy of the [DCHHS Novel Coronavirus Test Request Form](#) placed in the outer pouch of the biohazard bag. Multiple patient samples (individual bags for each patient) may be batched together in a single bag for delivery.

#### **Specimen Transport**

- **For patients who reside in Dallas County, submitter MUST obtain approval from the DCHHS Epidemiology division before a specimen can be sent to DCHHS for testing.** Please consult with DCHHS Epidemiology at 214-819-2004 during business hours or (877) 605-2660 after hours. In addition to a paper copy of the completed [DCHHS Novel Coronavirus Test Request Form](#) in the specimen shipment, please also fax one copy to 214-819-1933.
- For patients who **reside outside of Dallas County**, submitter must obtain approval for PUI reporting and testing from the appropriate respective county/state health department<sup>3</sup> prior to submission to the DCHHS LRN Laboratory.
- All healthcare facilities must arrange for transport of specimen from their facility to DCHHS; DCHHS will not pick up specimens from any submitters.
- Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and ship on cold packs within 24 hours of collection. After 24 hours of collection, specimen should be frozen at -70°C and shipped on dry ice.
- Follow packing and shipping instructions for Category B, Biological Substances (see <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/b08040a138dc4442a4f066e6fb99fe2a/dgr-61-en-pi650.pdf> for instructions).
- Ship according to IATA (International Air Transport Association) guidelines using overnight courier to arrive during business hours Monday–Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.
- Specimens delivered by same-day courier services between Monday–Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm will also be accepted.

#### **DCHHS LRN Shipping and Delivery Address:**

Dallas County Health and Human Services Laboratory  
2377 N. Stemmons Fwy., Basement Ste. 003  
Dallas, TX 75207

Laboratory: 972-692-2762  
Epidemiology: 214-819-2004  
After-hours: 877-605-2660