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

Interim Guidance updated as of July 21st, 2020

Criteria for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Testing Approval

- Per the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), all public health laboratories in Texas will use the CDC PUI criteria to prioritize testing of persons with suspected COVID-19 infection: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-criteria.html

- 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 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:

**Upper Respiratory Tract:**

- **Nasopharyngeal swab (NP swab)**
  - Use only a synthetic fiber swab with aplastic 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.]

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.

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1 DSHS Texas Local Public Health Organizations: https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/Regions/lhds.sht
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 (Option 6) 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 send one copy via encrypted email (COVID-19@dallascounty.org) or fax:

  **DCHHS Epidemiology fax numbers:**
  - 214-819-6095
  - 214-819-1933
  - 214-819-1883
  - 214-819-1907

- 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 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/b08040a138dc4442a4f066e6f99fe2a/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