



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 department¹ 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 specimen²:

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.]

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.

¹DSHS Texas Local Public Health Organizations: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/Regions/lhds.sht>

²CDC. 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

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 department³ 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