

Instructions

Collection of COVID-19 Upper Respiratory Specimens

COVID-19 specimen collection kits are designed for collecting and shipping upper respiratory specimens for COVID-19 PCR testing. Vials of virus transport medium (VTM) may need to be stored at 2-8° C or at room temperature prior to use depending on the manufacturer. However, **vials should be refrigerated immediately after specimen collection. Do NOT use if vials show leakage, or if transport medium appears contaminated (i.e. cloudy) or purple-colored.**

These instructions are for general use. Individual kit instructions may vary; refer to package insert if available.

NOTE: Virus Transport Medium contains antibiotics and SHOULD NOT be given to patients for collection of gargles or washes.

SPECIMEN HANDLING

All specimens for viral PCR should be refrigerated (at 2 – 8°C) immediately after collection and kept cold during transit, as many viruses are heat labile. Specimens should be transported to the laboratory without delay. Testing of specimens may be delayed or refused if improperly collected, improperly transported, or submitted with insufficient patient and clinical information. *Note that at least two patient identifiers must be provided on specimen containers and requisition forms, in order to meet regulatory requirements.*

COLLECTION OF COVID-19 SPECIMENS

1. Specimens should be obtained as soon as possible after illness onset, when the greatest amount of virus is present; the chance of virus recovery decreases as the illness progresses.
2. Polyester-, or Dacron-tipped swabs with plastic or aluminum shafts are recommended. (Do NOT use calcium alginate, cotton-tipped, or wood-shafted swabs.)
3. Don appropriate PPE (gloves, protective covering or lab coat, eye protection, and respiratory protection such as N95 respirator)
4. **Label each specimen container with patient's name, date of birth, specimen type, and date and time of collection.**
5. **For Nasopharyngeal swabs:** Insert the swab straight back into the patient's nose until you feel resistance or reach the mark on the swab shaft, whichever occurs first. Do not force the swab. Let sit for a few seconds to absorb liquid. Slowly remove the swab while twisting.
6. **For Nasal swabs:** Insert the swab into the nose and gently swirl around the wall 5 times. Use the same swab to repeat the process in the other nostril.
7. Place the swab into the tube.
8. Cut or snap the shaft of swab at the mark so that the cap of specimen container can be securely tightened.
9. Refrigerate (2 – 8°C) specimens immediately after collection.

PACKAGING AND TRANSPORT

1. Secure all tubes or vial caps with tape or parafilm.
2. Wrap tube with absorbent material.
3. Place specimens into a biohazard bag; seal bag securely.
4. Complete a Requisition Form for the laboratory and place in outer pocket of bag.
5. Place sample in mailer along with frozen cold pack and cushioning material as needed; seal mailer with tape.
6. Place address label and Category B/UN3373 label on mailer.
7. Attach label with the name, telephone number, and address of a person who has knowledge of the contents of the shipment.
8. Ship in accordance with current shipping regulations.
9. Select the most rapid method of transportation available (24 hour delivery is preferred). Specimens should be shipped to arrive at the laboratory before 4:30 p.m.