



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 criteria¹ 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 or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	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 and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset OR An individual(s) with risk factors that put them at higher risk or poor outcomes
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	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 department³ 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 specimen⁴:

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.]

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

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

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

⁴CDC. 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

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 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