

*****Health Advisory*****

Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Patients Under Investigation (PUIs) for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

01-23-2020



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Health care providers should contact the El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) at 915-212-6520 immediately to notify them of patients with fever and/or lower respiratory illness who traveled to Wuhan, China or have had contact with a patient under investigation within 14 days of symptom onset. DPH staff will determine if the patient meets the criteria for a patient under investigation (PUI) for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

At this time, diagnostic testing for 2019-nCoV can only be conducted at the CDC.

Specimen Type and Priority

To increase the likelihood of detecting infection. CDC recommends: Collection of three specimen types, lower respiratory, upper respiratory and serum specimens for testing is recommended. If possible, additional specimen types (e.g., stool, urine) should be collected and should be stored initially until decision is made by CDC whether additional specimen sources should be tested.

Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of symptom onset. Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens.

General Guidelines

Label each specimen container with the patient's ID number (e.g., medical record number), unique specimen ID (e.g., laboratory requisition number), specimen type (e.g., serum) and the date the sample was collected.

I. Respiratory Specimens

A. Lower respiratory tract

Bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate

Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

Sputum

Have the patient rinse their mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

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Department of Public Health

B. Upper respiratory tract

Nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab (NP/OP swab):

Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. Place swabs immediately into sterile tubes containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media. NP and OP specimens should be kept in separate vials.

Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Swab both nasopharyngeal areas with the same swab.

Oropharyngeal swab (e.g., throat swab): Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.

Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate: Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

II. Serum

Minimum volume required:

Children and adults: Collect 1 tube (5-10 mL) of whole blood in a serum separator tube.

Infant: A minimum of 1 mL of whole blood is needed for testing pediatric patients. If possible, collect 1 mL in a serum separator tube.

Serum separator tubes should be stored upright for at least 30 minutes, and then centrifuged at 1000–1300 relative centrifugal force (RCF) for 10 minutes before removing the serum and placing it in a separate sterile tube for shipping (such as a cryovial).

CDC highly recommends sending the samples directly to local health departments, therefore health care providers will be responsible for the transport of specimens to the El Paso Department of Public Health Laboratory at 4505 Alberta Ave 2nd Floor El Paso, TX 79905 within 24 hours of collection. For more information, please call (915) 212-0438. We operate Monday - Friday 0700 - 1800. If after hours or weekends, please call (915) 212-6520.

Store all specimens at 2-8°C for up to 24 hours after collection.

Any specimens held longer than 24 hours will need to be stored at -70°C.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>

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