



Health Alert Network Message 20-24: Updated Priorities for Testing Patients with Suspected COVID-19 Infection and Guidance for Testing at the State Lab

Origination Date:

April 14, 2020

Revision Dates (list all revision dates):

Updated Priorities for Testing Patients with Suspected COVID-19 Infection and Guidance for Testing at the State Laboratory

UPDATES: 04/14/2020

The OPH Laboratory will now test all Priority 1 and Priority 2 categories, and select Priority 3 category samples, according to the CDC's updated recommended priority groups found at the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/priority-testing-patients.pdf>

Providers can now send samples to the State laboratory from *symptomatic* patients in the following categories. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Priority 1: Ensures optimal care options for all hospitalized patients, lessen the risk of healthcare-associated infections, and maintain the integrity of the U.S. Healthcare system:

- Hospitalized Patients
- Healthcare Workers with Symptoms

Priority 2: Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged:

- Patients in long-term care facilities with symptoms
- Patients 65 years of age and older with symptoms
- Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms
- First responders with symptoms

Priority 3: As resources allow, the State Lab will test individuals in the surrounding community of rapidly increasing hospital cases to decrease community spread, and ensure health of essential workers:

- Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms
- 1. In addition, the lab prioritizes samples based on the acuity of the patients within these priority groups.

Currently, due to limited resources, we do not test non-priority asymptomatic individuals.

Specifics about Testing at the State Laboratory

The most recent acceptable criteria for submitting COVID-19 samples to the Office of Public Health Laboratory will be maintained using the following link. [Recent updates are outlined below.](#)

More information can be found here: <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/1993> or by emailing ELR@la.gov.

COVID-19 Testing Methods

The Office of Public Health Laboratory has added an additional method to its scope of testing for COVID-19. Our laboratory is performing both the CDC 2019-Novel Coronavirus Real-Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel and the Abbott RealTime SARS-CoV-2 Assay .

Specimen Containers

We have added clarity below to ensure all submitters are aware of the requirements if they choose to submit In-House Prepared Viral Transport Media.

In-House Prepared Viral Transport Media

In-House prepared Viral Transport Media (VTM) prepared and validated to meet CLIA requirements is an acceptable alternative.

- VTM must be prepared according to the manufacturer instructions.
- VTM must be labeled to indicate the following:
 - Identification (e.g. Viral Transport Media (VTM))
 - Storage requirements
 - Preparation and expiration dates
 - Other pertinent information required for proper use.

- You must NOT use cotton tipped swabs, calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.

Commercially Available Collection Supplies

Due to the decrease in availability of collection supplies, the OPH Laboratory will maintain a list of commercially manufactured media and/or swabs evaluated and approved for testing at our laboratory. Availability of these items is not guaranteed. **This is not all inclusive but will give guidance when ordering.** Prior to collection, ensure that the length of the swab is appropriate for the size of the VTM/UTM vial used, and the swab is appropriate for the specimen source to be collected.

- **[BD : 220527, 220531, 220528*, 220529, 220250, 220251, 220220, 220526, 220252], [Copan: 305C, 307C, 330C***, 360C, 501CS01, 502CS01, 503CS01, 518CS01, 519CS01*], [Copan-Hardy : 23001720 , 23001722], [DHI/Quidel : 330C***], [Fisher Healthcare: 23001718***, 23600952, 23600956, 23600950, 23600957*, 1490650**], [Hardy/Healthlink : 330CHL***], [Puritan : UT-306, UT-367, UT-302*, UT-361, UT-317, UT-366**, UT-300***, 25-3316-H, 25-3316-U, 25-3317-H, 25-3317-U, 25-3318-H, 25-3318-U, 25-3319-H, 25-3319-U, 25-3320-H, 25-3320-U, 25-3320-H EMB 80, 25-3320-U EMB 80, 25-1406 1PF 50, 25-3320-H EMB 100, 25-3320-U EMB, 25-800 1PD 50**, 25-800 1PD ALUM 50**, 25-3206-H, 25-3206-U, 25-3706-H, 25-806 1PD**, 25-1506 1PF 100], [Remel : R12567 (M40), R12563 (M6), R12505(M4RT)], [Starplex Scientific : S160-NASO, S160-FL], [Thomas Scientific : MSC-96000], [VWR : BDM220526], BDM220528J] [* flocked oropharyngeal swab, ** Polyester swab, *** no swab]**

Refer to *2019-Novel Coronavirus Real-Time RT-PCR Submitter Information* document for additional details:

<https://ldh-oph.qualtraxcloud.com/ShowDocument.aspx?ID=6446>

Specimen Collection

Nasopharynx (NP) swabs are still the preferred specimen; however, **Nasal Swabs (NS) have been added** as an acceptable specimen type.

Nasal swab collection: For NS, a single polyester swab with a plastic shaft should be used to sample both nares.

Test Requisition

We are encouraging the use of the Digital COVID-19 Test Request Form in lieu of the manual form.

https://appengine.egov.com/apps/la/LDH/Covid-19_Test_request

Specimen Transport

When using our courier, please continue to Label outermost bag with appropriate transport temperature (2-8°C or ≤ -70°C) to ensure your specimen is transported in the proper environmental conditions.

Submitter Set-Up

This form will allow the laboratory to add or update your facility in our system. Please complete ASAP to decrease any potential delays.

[Click Here to complete the Manual Submitter Update- Secure Fax Form](#) (This form must be faxed or emailed to the OPH laboratory)

Released Patient Reports

Results can be expected within 48-72 hours **upon specimen receipt at the OPH Laboratory**. You will receive the final report at the fax number provided during submission. Our facility is no longer calling to report positive COVID-19 results.

Communications

Provider Help Phone Line: 225-219-5265 (M-F 8am-4:30pm) or email COVIDLAB@LA.GOV (7a-Midnight daily).

If you have an ambulatory patient that does not fit the COVID-19 testing criteria for the State Laboratory, please follow all testing and shipping guidance from the commercial laboratory, including specimen collection, specimen container, and submission criteria.

Laboratories are required to report all SARS-CoV-2 laboratory results to LDH electronically. The following options for electronic reporting are available:

- HL7 is the preferred method for laboratories that have this established.
- CSV files, which are comma delimited files similar to an excel spreadsheet, are an alternate option.