



Health Alert Network Message 20-31: Update: Testing at State Lab

Origination Date:

May 3, 2020

Revision Dates (list all revision dates):

Update: Testing at the State Laboratory: 05/03/2020

The most recent acceptable criteria for submitting COVID-19 samples to the Office of Public Health Laboratory will be maintained using the following link. <https://ldh-oph.qualtraxcloud.com/ShowDocument.aspx?ID=6446>. Recent updates are outlined below.

Providers can now send samples to the State laboratory from *symptomatic* patients in the following Priority 1, 2 and select Priority 3 categories outlined by the CDC at:

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

- 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

In addition, the State lab prioritizes samples based on the acuity of the patients within these priority groups.

Some asymptomatic individuals in congregate settings may be prioritized for testing at the state laboratory by public health authorities to control spread within these settings.

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 the following methods. For simplicity, the general acceptable criteria for COVID-19 testing is listed; however, more specific criteria can be found at <https://ldh-oph.qualtraxcloud.com/ShowDocument.aspx?ID=6446>.

1. CDC 2019-Novel Coronavirus Real-Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel
2. Abbott RealTime SARS-CoV-2 Assay (Abbott M2000 System)
3. **Thermo Scientific TaqPath™ COVID-19 Combo Kit (**NEW METHOD**)**

Specimen Containers

Viral Transport Media (VTM) or Universal Transport Media (UTM) is acceptable.

- 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 is maintaining 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.** Refer to *2019-Novel Coronavirus Real-Time RT-PCR Submitter Information* document for this list.

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

Specimen Collection

Nasopharynx (NP) swabs are still the preferred specimen; however, **Nasopharyngeal Aspirates have been added** as an acceptable specimen type. Aspirates should be mixed with equal volumes of transport media.

Acceptable specimen types:

- Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab
- Oropharyngeal (throat) (OP) swabs
- **Nasopharyngeal Aspirate (**NEW**)**
- Nasopharyngeal / Oropharyngeal (NP/OP) swab combination (NP/OP)
- Nasal swabs (NS) (symptomatic patients only)

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 this form ASAP to decrease any potential delays.

[Click Here to complete the Online Submitter Update- Secure Fax Form](#) (This form is automatically sent to the OPH Laboratory)

OR

[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 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.) or email COVIDLAB@LA.GOV (7a.m.-Midnight daily).