



# Health Alert Network Message 20-35: Update: COVID-19 Testing at the State Laboratory 05/16/2020

Origination Date:  
May 16, 2020

Revision Dates (list all revision dates):

## Update: COVID-19 Testing at the State Laboratory: 05/16/2020

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-ph.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 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.qualtracxcloud.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

## Specimen Containers

Viral Transport Media (VTM), Universal Transport Media (UTM), or **Abbott multi-Collect Specimen Transport Buffer\* (\*\*NEW\*\*)** are 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.
- **(\*\*NEW\*\*)** Abbott multi-Collect Specimen Collection Kit
  - The Abbott kit list numbers are 09K12-01(CE), 09K12-02(CE), 09K12-03 and 09K12-04.
  - The kit contains the following:
    - individually packaged sterile nasal/oropharyngeal swab
      - The swab must be used only for the collection of **nasal** or **oropharyngeal** samples-not for nasopharyngeal swabbing.
    - transfer pipette
      - The transfer pipette must be used only for the collection of **nasal** or **oropharyngeal** samples-not for nasopharyngeal collection.
    - transport tube containing specimen transport buffer
      - If a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab (not from the kit) is used, the buffer in the kit may be used for collection of **nasopharyngeal** specimens.
      - The transport buffer may be used for transfer of **nasal, oropharyngeal, or nasopharyngeal** specimens.
  - NOTE: this specimen collection kit is only approved for use on the Abbott M2000 Analyzer.

## Specimen Collection

Nasopharynx (NP) swabs are still the preferred specimen.

Acceptable specimen types:

- Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab **(also acceptable with Abbott multi-Collection Kit buffer if collected with the appropriate swab but NOT the swab included in the kit \*\*NEW\*\*)**
- Oropharyngeal (throat) (OP) swabs **(also acceptable with Abbott multi-Collection Kit \*\*NEW\*\*)**
- Nasopharyngeal Aspirate **mixed with equal volumes of transport media (Not acceptable for the Abbott multi-Collection Kit)**
- Nasopharyngeal / Oropharyngeal (NP/OP) swab combination (NP/OP) **(Not acceptable for the Abbott multi-Collection Kit )**

- Nasal swabs (NS) (also acceptable with Abbott multi-Collection Kit **\*\*NEW\*\***)

### **Specimen Storage and Transport**

#### **Viral Transport Media (VTM) or Universal Transport Media (UTM)**

Store specimens containing VTM or UTM at **2-8°C** and ship for receipt within **72 hours** of collection.

Transport VTM or UTM specimens at **2-8°C** to laboratory as soon as possible after collection. Alternately, if shipping is delayed, VTM or UTM specimens should be frozen at **-70°C** or lower and shipped overnight on dry ice. If samples are frozen, freeze date and time is required on the test request form.

#### **Abbott multi-Collect Specimen Transport Buffer**

Store specimens containing Abbott multi-Collect specimen transport buffer at **2-25°C** and ship for receipt within **48 hours** of collection. Transport specimens containing Abbott multi-Collect specimen transport buffer at **2-25°C** to the laboratory as soon as possible after collection. Alternately, if shipping is delayed, specimens containing Abbott multi-Collect specimen transport buffer should be frozen at **-70°C** or lower and shipped overnight on dry ice. If samples are frozen, freeze date and time is required on the test request form. (**\*\*NEW\*\***)

When using our courier, please continue to Label outermost bag with appropriate transport temperature (2-8°C, 2-25oC or ≤ -70°C) to ensure your specimen is transported in the proper environmental conditions.

### **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](https://appengine.egov.com/apps/la/LDH/Covid-19_Test_request)

### **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 8am-4:30pm) or email [COVIDLAB@LA.GOV](mailto:COVIDLAB@LA.GOV) (7am-8pm daily).