



## DCHHS Submission Instructions for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) PCR Testing

*Interim Guidance updated as of March 10, 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 criteria<sup>1</sup> 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>

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever <b>or</b> signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	<b>AND</b>	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 <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	<b>AND</b>	A history of travel from <a href="#">affected geographic areas</a> within 14 days of symptom onset <b>OR</b> An individual(s) with risk factors that put them at higher risk or poor outcomes
Fever <b>and</b> signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	<b>AND</b>	No source of exposure has been identified

- 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 department<sup>3</sup> 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 specimens<sup>4</sup>:

#### **Upper Respiratory Tract: (Both of the below specimens are REQUIRED)**

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

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup>CDC. 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

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**[Whole blood, serum, urine, and stool will NOT be accepted.]**

### **Criteria for Specimen Handling**

- All specimens **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, OP, BAL)
  5. Date of Specimen Collection
- Specimens that are not appropriately labeled will **NOT** be accepted for testing.
- All specimens 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 department<sup>3</sup> prior to submission to the DCHHS LRN Laboratory.
- All healthcare facilities must arrange for transport of specimens from their facility to DCHHS; DCHHS will not pick up specimens from any submitters.
- Refrigerate specimens at 2-8°C and ship on cold packs within 24 hours of collection. After 24 hours of collection, specimens 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