Specimen Collection Instructions – ANY Lab – Updated 3-15-20

Collect a nasopharyngeal swab (NP swab)

As of March 13, the CDC is now recommending collecting only an NP swab.

- Use a synthetic fiber swab with plastic shaft. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts.
- Insert swab into nostril parallel to the palate, leave swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions.
- Place swab immediately into a sterile tube containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media.

If you choose to additionally collect an oropharyngeal swab (OP swab):

- Use a synthetic fiber swab with plastic shaft. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts.
- Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.
- Place into the SAME tube of viral transport media as the NP swab. Combining the NP and OP swabs (if you choose to collect an OP swab) into one specimen tube is critically important to conserve supplies of testing reagents.

Note: We recommend collecting only a NP swab. If collecting both, NP and OP swabs must be placed together in a single viral transport media, such as ones used to collect NP swabs for influenza testing, shown here. Improper collection, such as placing swabs in bacterial culture media, will void the specimen and delay testing.

An NP swab is the priority specimen. If you would like to test any of the following specimens, please call SFDPH at 415-554-2830 to discuss:

- **Sputum**: Collect sputum only if the patient is producing sputum; **do not perform sputum induction procedures**. Have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

- **Bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate, or pleural fluid**: 2-3 mL in a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

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

Store all specimen types at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours after collection. If a delay in testing or shipping is expected, store specimens at -70°C or below.

**Note:** If specimens cannot be collected at the healthcare facility, do not refer the patient to another facility to obtain specimens. Instead, notify SFDPH at 415-554-2830 to discuss.
Specimen Handling Instructions – San Francisco Public Health Lab ONLY

(Note: these instructions are for sending specimens to SFPHL only. If you are sending to another clinical or commercial lab, check with the specific laboratory for details regarding its specimen handling guidelines.)

Upon approval by SFDPH, arrangements will be made for transport of specimens for COVID-19 testing to the San Francisco Public Health Laboratory (SFPHL). Use Category B infectious substance packaging instructions and transport on a cold pack. The SFPHL will process specimens for testing.

**Do not send specimens directly to CDC or CDPH.**

For biosafety reasons, it is not recommended to perform viral isolation in cell culture or initial characterization of viral agents recovered in cultures of specimens from a person under investigation for 2019-nCoV.

Please complete the SFPHL General Requisition Form, available here: [https://www.sfcdcp.org/public-health-lab/forms-specimen-culture-submission/](https://www.sfcdcp.org/public-health-lab/forms-specimen-culture-submission/).

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

CDC 2019 Novel Coronavirus Guidance for Laboratories.

Infection Control and Patient Disposition

- **Observe infection control procedures for suspected COVID-19 patients**
  - Ensure the patient is wearing a surgical mask
  - Isolate the masked patient in a private room with the door closed. Isolation in an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR) is preferred, if available
  - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) consisting of gloves, gown, respiratory protection (N95 mask or PAPR) and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
  - Observe standard, contact, and airborne precautions plus eye protection.

- **Disposition**
  - While awaiting COVID-19 test results, patients sick enough to require hospitalization should be managed according to CDC guidelines for infection control in healthcare settings. See: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html)
  - While awaiting COVID-19 test results, patients well enough to recuperate at home may be discharged to home with instructions to self-isolate at home until results of testing are available. **Printable patient instructions in multiple languages are posted at [https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19hcp](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19hcp)**