

NYSDOH Wadsworth Center COVID-19 Specimen Collection, Handling and Transport Instructions¹



- Discuss transport processes with LHD²
- Estimated turnaround time for suspect COVID-19 test results from specimen arrival at the Wadsworth Center is 1-2 business days.

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

NP swab:

- Collect one nasopharyngeal (NP) swab.
- Tube must be labeled with patient first and last name, DOB, date of collection, and type of specimen. The label on the tube must match the paperwork.
- Ensure sample containers are leakproof, with caps tightly secured.
- Flocked swabs are preferred as they provide better specimen recovery. Sterile dacron or rayon swabs with plastic or flexible metal handles may also be used. These are the same types of swabs and media used for influenza PCR testing. Do NOT use cotton or calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden sticks as they contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR. After swabbing, place swabs in LIQUID viral transport or universal transport media.
- Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions.
- Dry swabs not in media or in other transport media are NOT acceptable for virus testing.

STORAGE, HANDLING, AND PACKAGING

The Wadsworth Center COVID-19 Packaging & Transport Checklist and Illustrations can help through this process.

- Place specimens in a watertight secondary container (e.g. plastic biohazard bag) with absorbent material.
- Place secondary container in shipping box.
- Use a sturdy cardboard box, with a Styrofoam insert, to ensure cold temperature is maintained.
- Storage: Until transported, the **swab should be kept cold** (refrigerated at 4°C (2-8°C) and transported as soon as possible using frozen cold packs.
- Packaging: Pack the box with 2-3 **frozen** gel packs; samples must remain cold during entire duration of shipment. **Do NOT use wet ice or dry ice.**
- Fill out a NYSDOH Wadsworth Center Infectious Disease Requisition (IDR) Form. Alternatively, the Wadsworth Center Remote Order Entry is available³.
- IDR must be included and NOT come in contact with the specimen.
- Enter NYSDOH Outbreak Number: OMS202015920 on the IDR form under Outbreak Number.

¹ Please note: this document refers only to COVID-19 samples being sent to the Wadsworth Center, Laboratory of Viral Diseases. These instructions do not apply to Blood Borne Pathogen (i.e. HIV or HCV) or microbiology testing. While these other Wadsworth laboratories are located in the same building, specimens for testing in these other laboratories should be packaged and shipped separately.

² If a suspect case temporarily resides in a location such as a school/college or is a traveler visiting a jurisdiction, then report immediately to that county LHD.

³ Contact the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center Laboratory of Viral Diseases for further details: (518) 474-4177
www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/virology or for more information on Wadsworth Center remote order entry:
www.wadsworth.org/electronic-test-request-reporting-new

TRANSPORT

- Routine virology specimens are classified as Category B Infectious Substances.
- Packages to be transported to:

Laboratory of Viral Diseases

David Axelrod Institute,

Wadsworth Center

120 New Scotland Ave

Albany, NY 12208

Healthcare Providers with questions or public health concerns: Contact the local health department.

Local Health Department with questions or public health concerns: Notify the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, 518-473-4439, M-F 8am to 5pm, or after hours at (866) 881-2809.

RESOURCES AND TRAINING

All persons involved in packing and shipping human clinical specimens for testing must receive training such as the CDC Packing and Shipping Training or another certified training program.