

Notice for Laboratories: NSHA and IWK

With the spread of a novel coronavirus, laboratories may get requests for testing for COVID-19.

What is different in this memo:


- Prior approval from MOH and Microbiologist is **no longer required** in all cases except for community requests as indicated below:
- **Only one NP swab** (in Universal/viral Transport Medium) should be sent.
- **Throat and Nares swabs using the AMPITMA Multi swab are and acceptable alternative when viral swab supply is exhausted.** (see picture below)
- Respiratory Panel testing will only be available upon special request by the CZ (QEII) microbiologist on call (902-473-2222). Routine seasonal Influenza testing will continue.

Site sending Sample:	Do I need to call the MOH?
Hospitalized / Emergency room	No – proceed with processing
Special COVID-19 assessment center	No – proceed with processing
Long term care facility	No – proceed with processing
Community physician (requests should diminish with Assessment Centers online and swab inventory stewardship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the healthcare provider is seeking general information, refer to the latest public health OCMOH guidance bulletin found on Coronavirus Page • Unless noted on requisition, all Labs to call physician and confirm COVID-19 screening criteria are met (see Appendix) BEFORE forwarding to Central zone for testing

LABORATORY SPECIMEN COLLECTION, HANDLING AND TESTING

Test Request:	COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)	
Collection Precautions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate Contact and Droplet Precautions (gloves, gowns, mask and eye protection/face shield or mask with visor) when within 2 meters of patient suspected or confirmed to have nCoV-2019 infection. This would apply for collection of nasopharyngeal swabs for example. • Aerosol generating medical procedures (e.g. bronchoscopy, intubation, nasopharyngeal or endotracheal aspirates) should be performed in airborne isolation rooms and only if medically necessary. The number of healthcare workers present should be limited during these procedures and a respirator (N95) mask should be worn in addition to other PPE by all persons present in the room. 	
Specimen(s)	Container	Collection details
Please ensure that the appropriate PPE is used during the collection of the specimen:		
nasopharyngeal swab <i>(upper respiratory)</i> preferred sample, only one NP required	viral transport medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection kit includes flocked swab and tube of transport medium. • Insert the swab approximately 6 cm (or in infants/children ½ distance from base of nose to lobe of ear) with a slow, steady motion along the floor of the nose until a point of resistance is met (2/3 of the distance from nostrils to external opening of ear). Rotate the swab several times and then withdraw it. • Insert the swab into the transport vial, snap off the stem and close tightly before shipping.
Lower respiratory sample can be added if the patient's condition warrants it (i.e., there is significant lower tract disease)		
sputum <i>(upper respiratory)</i>	sterile container	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct the patient not to spit into the sample container, but to take a deep breath and cough directly into the container.
aspirated respiratory secretions or bronchial wash <i>(lower respiratory)</i> preferred sample	sterile container	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suction catheter and a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap test tube or sterile container are required. • Collect secretions by suctioning and place 1-4 mL of secretions in a sterile test tube or sterile container.
- Refrigerate samples at 4°C and send to the central zone laboratory at the QE II HSC		

Note: If the supply of our viral swabs becomes depleted we have a contingency plan to use the Aptima® Multitest Swab to collect a throat and nares combination

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ALTERNATE COLLECTION OF A THROAT AND NARES SWABS FOR COVID-19				
Container		Specimen Source	Store Before Collection	Store After Collection
Aptima® Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit		<p>Throat and Nares to be collected from the single swab.</p> <p>DO NOT USE this swab for Nasopharyngeal collection</p>	Room Temperature	Refrigerate

TRANSPORT – Primary specimens should be shipped as Category B, UN3373.

OTHER LABORATORY CONSIDERATIONS

Laboratories performing routine hematology, urinalysis, and clinical chemistry activities and microbiology laboratories performing diagnostic tests on serum, blood or urine specimens should follow routine practices.

Laboratory testing for microbiology labs

Given the limited information currently available on the novel Coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, specimens that may be infectious (e.g., respiratory specimens) must be handled under **CL2+ procedures**:

- Primary specimens should be labelled to indicate the requirement for additional precautions.
- Activities involving open containers of infectious material must be conducted in a biological safety cabinet (BSC).
- When processing primary specimens that may be infectious (e.g., respiratory specimens), enhanced PPE must be worn, including double nitrile gloves, impermeable OR gown, face mask (N95 not required), and eye protection while working in a BSC.
- The centrifugation of infectious material must be carried out in sealed safety cups (or rotors) that are unloaded in a BSC.
- The surfaces of specimen containers, etc. must be surface decontaminated (or placed into a clean specimen bag) before removal from the BSC. Waste bags must be securely closed before removal from the BSC.
- After specimens are processed, decontaminate work surfaces and equipment with a disinfectant in routine use.
- Additional PPE should be considered if working with respiratory specimens outside a BSC.
- Additional guidance for microbiology will be provided in a PPHLN risk assessment. Provincial BSO guidance available.
- Urine samples should be sent for Legionella antigen testing if the SARI protocol is being followed.

LABORATORY CONTACTS

Should you have any questions, contact your local lab / lab management or those listed below from the central zone lab at the QEII:

On-call medical microbiologist - page through QEII locating 902-473-2222			
Name	Position	Email	Office phone
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