



Healthcare Provider & Facility Guidance: SARS-CoV-2 Testing at Washington State Public Health Laboratories

Testing for SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19 disease, is an important component for monitoring the impact of COVID-19 and for planning interventions. These guidelines for testing at Washington State Public Health Laboratories (PHL) are based on available information about the virus and CDC recommendations for testing.

To ensure timely and reliable test results from PHL, please make sure that:

- A. The patient meets criteria for testing at PHL (local health jurisdiction approval)**
- B. The specimen type is acceptable and has been collected properly**
- C. The specimen is labeled, packaged, and shipped properly**

A. Criteria for testing at PHL

Testing criteria may change frequently. Providers should consult with their local health jurisdiction for testing approval:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>

On 2/28/2020 the current SARS-CoV-2 testing criteria are:

- 1) Fever **or** lower respiratory symptoms/signs **AND** close contact (including healthcare work) with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case within 14 days of symptom onset
- 2) Fever **and** lower respiratory symptoms/signs requiring hospitalization **AND** travel to an affected geographic (CDC level 2 or 3) within 14 days of onset; see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- 3) Fever with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization (or fatal) **and** without alternative explanatory diagnosis (test negative for other viral respiratory pathogens)
- 4) Local health officer request (any equivocal epidemiology or clinical symptoms)

Clinicians should consider and, as appropriate, continue investigating other potential causes of the symptoms while waiting for SARS-CoV-2 test results.

If SARS-CoV-2 testing is available at a commercial laboratory, immediately report positive results to the local health jurisdiction.

For specimen collection, testing and shipping details, and **COV** Specimen Submission Form see: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu>

See page 2 for summary of testing instructions.

QUESTIONS? Most questions should be directed to your local health jurisdiction. DOH Communicable Diseases Epidemiology may be reached at 206-418-5500

Last update 2/27/2020 1

B. Specimen collection for SARS-CoV-2 testing

Initiate isolation (home or in hospital standard, contact, and airborne precautions.)

Use appropriate personal protection while taking specimens, including at least: gown, gloves, NIOSH-certified fit-tested N-95 respirator or higher, and goggles (or face shield). **Ensure the container caps are closed tightly** after collection. Specimens that leak in transit will be rejected.

Submit two of the following specimens for each patient for SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing at PHL:

1. Nasopharyngeal swab
2. Sputum or BAL if available
3. Oropharyngeal swab, if no sputum or BAL

If a PHL test kit is available, follow instructions. For NP and OP swabs, use a synthetic swab (Dacron, polyester, or nylon) with plastic or metal shaft (**not** cotton, calcium alginate or wooden shaft.) The submitted swab must not have contact with reagents used for other tests. Place in viral or universal transport medium, label with date, specimen source, and two patient identifiers, and refrigerate until ready to ship. Sputum or BAL should go in sterile screw cap container. Freeze specimens ($\leq -70^{\circ}\text{C}$) if expected arrival at PHL is ≥ 72 hours after collection. Complete the **CoV (not Virology)** specimen submission form **including the SARS-CoV-2 approval number** from the local health jurisdiction.

C. Specimen shipping

PLEASE NOTE: PHL must receive specimens within **72 hours of collection at 2-8°C** with chemical ice packs, or frozen and shipped with dry ice. Arrival after 10 AM will delay testing.

Specimens should be shipped Category B. The submitter must correctly package and label specimens to meet shipping regulations. Persons shipping medical specimens must have documented shipping training for packaging and labeling of Infectious Substances. Use a permanent marker to **write the approval number on the outer plastic packaging bag.**

Washington State Public Health Laboratories – Attention BT Laboratory
1610 NE 150th Street
Shoreline, WA 98155

D. PHL Testing Procedures

PHL uses an RT-PCR test developed by CDC. Turnaround time is 3-5 business days from receipt of specimens. Final results may be delayed if further work is needed, such as confirmatory testing by CDC. A positive result is considered presumptive and must be confirmed by CDC.

PHL presumptive and CDC confirmatory results are sent to the local health jurisdiction and to the submitter by autofax.