

How do I order a COVID-19 PCR test?

- You must first consult with local and/or state public health prior to ordering any testing.
- Once approved, the state public health laboratory will walk you through the ordering process.

Timing of Specimen Collection

Specimens should be collected as soon as patient is identified as a suspected COVID-19 case regardless of symptom onset.

Specimen Types

Collect a **nasopharyngeal** and **oropharyngeal** swab using only those with a synthetic tip (e.g., polyester, dacron) and an aluminum or plastic shaft.

Place each swab in a separate tube of viral transport media or universal transport media.

Do not use swabs with cotton tips and wooden shafts or swabs made of calcium alginate.

A sputum sample may be collected if the patient has a productive cough and placed in a sterile container. Induction of sputum is not recommended.

Specimen Storage

Refrigerate all specimens promptly after collection. Specimens should be shipped within 72 hours of collection on cold packs.

Do not freeze.

Specimen Labeling and Documentation

All specimens must be labeled with:

- *Patient name and a unique identifier, such as medical record # or date of birth
- *Specimen type
- *Date collected

For more information please visit

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>

How do I fill out the requisition?

Use MTPHLs standard Public Health Laboratory Request Form and write COVID-19 test in the "Comments" section.

Be sure to fill out all Patient Information and Specimen Details, including Date of Onset.

When are results available?

PCR results are typically available the same day the specimen is received at MTPHL Mon–Fri. *STAT weekend testing is available upon consultation.*

If the specimens need to be submitted to CDC, the results should be available within 3-days of receipt.

How do I transport the specimen to the laboratory?

- Once approved, the specimens may be transported by courier or overnight by FedEx or UPS
- Specimens must be packaged as Category B and sent in cold condition.

Safety Note

Health care personnel collecting clinical samples from potentially infectious patients should follow infection prevention and control recommendations.

Sample processing should be performed in at least a Class II biological safety cabinet following a minimum of biosafety level 2 guidelines. Please refer to the CDC website for specimen handling and biosafety guidelines.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/index.html>

Who should I contact for testing information?

- MTPHL lab toll free number 1-800-821-7284
- Collection supplies available upon request.