

# **COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) Guidance**

## **Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Laboratory**

### **General Background**

On February 11, 2020 the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease that is causing the current outbreak of coronavirus disease, COVID-19.

**SARS-CoV-2** has been identified as the causative agent of a recent outbreak of **COVID-19** (2019 Novel Coronavirus - previously called 2019-nCoV) respiratory illnesses first detected in Wuhan, China. For more information go to the CDC website at:

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

### **What steps to take if you suspect a COVID-19 Infection**

To request COVID-19 testing for a suspect case, health care providers must contact the MDH Infectious Disease Bureau at 410-767-6700 during business hours and after hours call the MDH Emergency Call Center at 410-795-7365 to arrange the initial disease consultation.

**COVID-19 testing can only be conducted with prior authorization from MDH physician–epidemiologists and is restricted to patients who meet the current CDC Criteria to Guide Evaluation of Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 case definition (CDC link; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>)**

**Do not collect and submit specimens to the MDH Laboratory until an infectious disease consultation with the MDH physician-epidemiologist has been conducted and approval has been obtained to provide testing for the case.**

After the consultation, if COVID-19 testing is indicated and authorized, the MDH Laboratory will contact you or your institution's laboratory to make any additional logistical arrangements needed for expedited testing. **The Maryland Department of Health Laboratory will be testing locally using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2019-Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Real-Time Reverse Transcriptase (RT)-PCR Diagnostic Panel which has been approved for emergency use authorization (EUA) by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).**

**Updated Interim Guidance and Instructions for Submission of Specimens for Suspected COVID-19 Infections: Testing at the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Laboratory** [\(Link that goes to new Test Coronavirus Memo from 3/3/2020\)](#)

Please note: At present (02/24/2020) the naming of the CDC 2019-nCoV real time PCR assay cannot be changed to SARSCoV-2 until a formal application is made to the FDA to modify the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) package insert for this assay.

**Fact Sheets:**

- [Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers: CDC-2019-nCoV Real-Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Patients: CDC-nCoV Real-Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel](#)

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Specimen Collection and Shipping Guidance**

**Specimen Types** - Collection of two specimen types, lower respiratory and upper respiratory, is recommended. **Please collect an additional Nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) in a separate tube of viral transport media for respiratory pathogen testing at the MDH Laboratories**

**Administration.** Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of symptom onset. Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens. Refer to chart below for collection and storage instructions.

Specimen Type	Specimen Collection & Storage Instructions
Lower Respiratory (sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage, and tracheal aspirate)	For bronchoalveolar lavage and tracheal aspirates collect 2-3 ml into a leak-proof, sterile, screw cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container. Refrigerate at 2-8°C and ship on ice pack to the Maryland Department of Health Laboratory. For sputum collections, have the patient rinse their mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a leak-proof, sterile, screw cap sputum collection cup.
Upper respiratory (nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) and oropharyngeal swab (OPS))	Collect a nasopharyngeal swab and an oropharyngeal swab in separate viral transport media tubes (2-3ml). Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts as they may inhibit PCR testing or inactivate some viruses. Place swabs, after collecting patient specimen, directly into 2-3 ml of viral transport media. NP and OP specimens must be placed in separate vials. Refrigerate at 2-8°C and ship on ice pack to the Maryland Department of Health Laboratory.

<b>Nasopharyngeal Wash/Aspirate or Nasal Aspirate</b>	For NP wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate, collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container. Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and ship on ice pack to the Maryland Department of Health Laboratory.
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Specimen collection kits (Viral Culture Kit) can be ordered by the local health department by calling 443-681-3777 and submitting via email or fax the Outfit Supply Requisition form. (See link below)

- [Outfit Supply Requisition 2019 Fillable Form](#)

### **Completing the MDH Laboratory Test Request Form**

The MDH Laboratories Administration Form # 4676 Infectious Agents: Culture /Detection must be completed and submitted with each of the recommended specimens (1) lower respiratory and (2) upper respiratory.

Click an example of the completed form #4676 and the electronic fillable form.

- [Lab Requisition Sample Completed Form \(#4676\)](#)
- [Electronic Fillable Lab Requisition](#)

### **Packaging and Shipping**

Specimens must be packaged in a triple packaging system to ensure that under normal conditions of transport they cannot break, be punctured or leak their contents (Refer to page 9 in the Lab Services Guide)

- [Packaging and Shipping Guide](#) (Pages 9 to 11)

### **Contact Information:**

To request COVID-19 testing for a suspect case, health care providers must contact the MDH Infectious Disease Bureau at 410-767-6700 during business hours and after hours call the MDH Emergency Call Center at 410-795-7365 to arrange the initial disease consultation.

For questions or concerns, please contact the Division of Molecular Biology Laboratory at 443-681-3924 or 443-681-3800 during normal business hours from 8:00AM-4:30PM.