

THE VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LABORATORY

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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTION AND PACKAGING OF SPECIMENS FOR
NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

Please notify Vermont Department of Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology at (802) 863-7240 (available 24/7) to report patients under investigation.

Specimen Requirements and Collection

Label all specimens with the patient name and the collection date.

1. Lower respiratory tract

Bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate

- Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

Sputum

- Have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

2. Upper respiratory tract

Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. **NP and OP specimens should be kept in separate vials or combined into a single vial at the time of collection.**

1. Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab

- a. Pass the NP swab through the nares. Resistance will be met, and this will confirm contact with the nasopharynx.
- b. Rub the swab tip several times across the mucosal surface. This will loosen and collect cellular material. Allow a time of contact of up to 30 seconds.
- c. Withdraw the swab and place in the viral transport media. Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip.
- d. Break or cut the end of the swab and screw the vial lid on tightly.

2. Oropharyngeal (OP)

- a. Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.
- b. Vigorously swab both the tonsils and the posterior pharynx.
- c. Place swab into the transport media. Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip.
- d. Break or cut the end of the swab and screw the vial lid on tightly.

3. Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate

- a. Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

Specimen Storage and Shipment

Storage: 2-8°C for up to 72 hours after collection
-70°C or lower if >72 hours after collection

Shipment: Ship as soon as possible at refrigerated temperature (2-8°C) or frozen if >72 hours after collection.

Follow shipping regulations for UN 3373 Biological Substance, Category B when sending potential COVID-19 patient specimens. Refer to Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html>

Specimen Rejection:

- No patient information on the specimen and request form.
- Improper shipment temperature
- Too old to test
- Specimen leaked in transit and/or there is insufficient specimen for testing
- Inappropriate specimen type