



Instructions for Submission of Specimens for COVID-19 Testing at the New York City Public Health Laboratory (PHL)

Please call the Coronavirus Testing Call Center at 1-866-692-3641 to report a suspected COVID-19 case. Once testing has been authorized, submitters must follow the instructions outlined below.

1. Order your test through eOrder

- No specimen will be tested without a completed eOrder requisition form. If your facility is not already using eOrder, please visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/reporting-and-services/public-health-lab.page>
- **EACH SPECIMEN** requires its own eOrder form. For example, if you are submitting a nasopharyngeal swab, a nasal swab, and a saliva specimen from the same patient, you need to order three tests at the same time. Three requisitions will appear once the test order is completed.
- In eOrder, all fields in red are required before submitting an order. We encourage users to also include non-required information if that data is readily available (e.g., race, ethnicity, patient address, etc.).
- Place only one specimen in each specimen bag and place the corresponding form in the outer pocket of the bag.

2. Collect specimens

Upper respiratory tract (preferred specimen combination):

- Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab
- Nasal swab (anterior nares; may be self-collected by the patient)
- Saliva (**at least 3ml self-collected by the patient, see below**)

Additional acceptable specimen types:

- Nasopharyngeal swab/Oropharyngeal swab (NP/OP, combined in same VTM tube)
- Lower respiratory specimens (sputum or tracheal aspirate)

Swabs must be synthetic (non-cotton), non-absorbent, and flocked, and placed in liquid VTM. Swabs NOT in VTM are NOT acceptable. For **nasal swabs**, flocked swabs are preferred, while sterile dacron or rayon swabs with plastic or flexible metal handles are also acceptable. DO NOT use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden sticks.

Saliva should be collected in a specimen cup or other sterile screw cap container. **The patient should not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum tobacco for 30 minutes prior to collection.**

For additional guidance on specimen collection, see "[Nasal Swab and Saliva Collection Guidance](#)".

3. Label the specimen

Failure to properly label the specimen will result in rejection and the specimen will not be tested.

- Specimen tubes **MUST** be labeled with:
 - Patient's First and Last Names
 - Patient's Date of Birth
 - Date of Collection
 - Specimen Source
- All information on the specimen label must **EXACTLY MATCH** the information on the eOrder form, including the spelling and order of the patient's first and last names.

4. Specimen handling

- Keep specimens refrigerated while awaiting transport.
- Transport with cold ice packs if the specimens are transported within 72 hours from the time of specimen collection. If exceeding 72 hours, freeze at -70°C and transport on dry ice.
- Follow shipping regulations for UN 3373 Biological Substance, Category B when sending potential 2019-nCoV (COVID-19) specimens. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html> for additional information.