
Instructions for Collection and Submission of Nasopharyngeal Swab Specimens for COVID-19 Testing

New Mexico Scientific Laboratory Division

1. Store kit away from light and below 30° C.
2. The kit contains a flexible-shafted swab. To collect patient specimens:
Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions.
3. Insert swab in tube of viral transport media.
4. **All specimens must be submitted using the viral transport medium in the collection tube.**
5. Break off swab at indentation. (If swab is not completely in the tube when the cap is tightened, specimen will leak in transit).
6. Cap tightly and preserve at 2-8° C.
7. Complete the SLD General Clinical Request Form *found in the collection kit* as completely as possible (yellow highlighted areas are required). Information provided is important for tracking patient results. **Specimens and submission forms should be labeled with two forms of ID (patient name and patient ID) to properly match to submission form and send results to CDC. Ensure that tube label information matches the patient information on requisition form and specimen source information is correct.**
8. Check the **Nasopharyngeal swab** box under specimen source.
9. Submit to SLD within 24 hours. COVID-19 RT-PCR is most successful with fresh specimens. Pack viral transport tube with a cold pack to maintain cool temperature throughout transport. If the specimen will not be received by the Virology/Serology Section within 72 hours, it may be frozen at $\leq -70^{\circ}\text{C}$ and submitted frozen on dry ice.
10. Samples must be packaged according to Department of Transportation or IATA regulations. Place samples in biohazard transport bags. Do not place paperwork in the same compartment as the sample. Package in an insulated cooler box. Label the outside of the box with an emergency contact name (full first and last), an emergency contact phone number, and a 'UN3373 Biological Substance Category' B label.
11. **The kits are labeled with expiration dates. Expired kits may become toxic to viruses or inhibitory for PCR. If new kits are needed, contact the NMDOH Department Operations Center (DOC) at (505) 476-8284 or by e-mail at Section.DOC-Operations@state.nm.us .** For other questions regarding virus testing, call the Virology/Serology section at 505-383-9124 or 505-383-9125.

SCIENTIFIC LABORATORY DIVISION

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