

How do I order a COVID-19 PCR test?

We are not requiring pre-approval for testing, but we are asking facilities to be judicious with ordering.

Please make sure to document signs and symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have highly suspect patients (hospitalized, healthcare workers, or first responders) in the comment section to help us prioritize these patients. Epi consultation for these suspect patients is also helpful in identification.

Specimen Types

As of March 24, 2020, CDC is allowing for anterior nares, mid turbinate, or oropharyngeal sampling if **nasopharyngeal swabs are unavailable**.

Swabs should have a synthetic tip (e.g., polyester, dacron) and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Do not use swabs with cotton tips and wooden shafts or swabs made of calcium alginate.

***Place swab into at least one mL** of viral transport media or universal transport media or sterile saline.

Specimen Storage

Refrigerate all specimens promptly after collection. Specimens should be shipped within 72 hours of collection on cold packs. **Only freeze if transport will be over 72 hours.**

Specimen Labeling and Documentation

All specimens must be labeled with:

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

How do I fill out the requisition

Use MTPHL's standard Public Health Laboratory Request Form and mark COVID-19 or write it in the "Comments" section.

Please make sure the facility information and account number is in the upper right hand side of the requisition. Contact MTPHL if you need a request form.

Be sure to fill out all Patient Information, including medical record number, DOB, sex, and patient zip code, along with **Specimen Type** and Date of Onset.

When are results available?

If the sample is received by 11 AM, PCR results are typically available the same day or day after receipt at MTPHL, depending on volume and priority. *Testing is being performed seven days/week at this time.*

How do I transport the specimen to the laboratory?

Specimens may be transported by courier or overnight by FedEx or UPS. Courier service has been expanded to include additional sites Monday through Friday only. Weekend pickup will be at the usual sites, but will also include Saturday (please check our website for times: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/LaboratoryServices/CourierRoutesSampleDelivery>).

Specimens must be packaged as Category B and sent in **cold** condition (on dry ice if specimens were frozen.) Package specimens separately from other specimens.

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?

Collection supplies are limited, but we are trying to accommodate all orders.

MTPHL lab toll free number 1-800-821-7284