

# Montana Public Health Laboratory Guidance: Measles Testing



*State communicable disease reporting rules require health care providers suspecting measles to report suspected cases to local public health authorities **immediately**. Public health authorities may implement immediate control measures to prevent transmission and/or arrange immediate transport of the specimen when warranted.*

## Specimen Criteria

Collect the following specimens to test for measles infection:

- Respiratory Specimen (Throat, NP, Nasal Swab)
- Serum

## Specimen Collection for PCR Testing:

Collect specimens as soon as possible after appearance of rash, and ideally within 3 days of rash onset.

Detection can be possible up to day 7 following onset of rash. *Respiratory Specimen:* Throat, Nasopharyngeal, or Nasal Dacron swabs in viral transport media.

*Consult with Public Health authorities regarding PCR testing prior to rash development of individuals who may have had a recent exposure to measles.*

## Specimen Collection for IgM Testing:

For IgM testing, specimens must be collected >48 hours post rash onset.

- *Serum:* 1 – 2 ml of serum. Can be sent in a spun serum separator tube or can be poured off into a transport tube.

## Transport Conditions:

- Keep *Respiratory specimens* cold, and transport with cold packs as soon as possible following specimen collection. Avoid repeat freeze-thaw cycles. If specimen transport is going to be delayed >24 hours, freeze the sample at -70°C and ship on dry ice.
- *Serum* specimens can be shipped cold (refrigerated) or frozen (preferable for IgM testing).

## Submission Reminders:

\*Please be sure to include the collection date and at least two patient identifiers (Name and DOB or medical record #) on the sample container.

\*Use the online portal to order found at <https://labportal.hhs.mt.gov>. \*For respiratory specimens, order Measles PCR. \*For serology specimens, order Rubella IgM Serology (ND). \*Be sure to select the appropriate specimen source when ordering. \*For the Onset Date, enter the date of rash onset.

\*Print the Requisition form, verify patient identifiers match the sample, and place the paperwork in the side pouch of the specimen bag. \*Place the two specimens in separate specimen bags with the correct paperwork in each pouch. \*Finally, create a manifest for all samples being shipped and place the manifest separately in the shipping container.

Specimens can be transported by courier (if available), UPS or FedEx to:

Montana Public Health Laboratory  
1400 Broadway, Room B126  
Helena, MT 59601

**Please contact the Montana Public Health Laboratory at 1-800-821-7284 for more information and remember to report any suspect measles to your local health department.**