

# GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND SHIPPING

ALABAMA  
PUBLIC  
HEALTH

## **SPECIMEN COLLECTION & STORAGE:**

- Exercise standard, contact & airborne precautions during the collection of specimens. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html>
- For initial diagnostic testing, collect upper respiratory specimens. (For specific guidance, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>)
- Include patient's name and date of birth on the collection container.
  - I. Upper respiratory tract specimens **(any 1 of the following is sufficient):**
    - Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab, oropharyngeal swab, **OR** nasal mid-turbinate/deep nasal swab in viral transport medium (VTM) **OR**
    - NP wash/aspirate or nasal aspirate in sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container **OR**
    - Anterior nares swab in VTM.
  - II. Lower respiratory tract options (Optional - based on productive cough)
    - Sputum- 2 mL directly into a sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container. **OR**
    - Bronchoalveolar lavage or tracheal aspirate - 2-3 mL in a sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container.
- Storage - Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C if unable to transport immediately. Specimen needs to reach the BCL, with a frozen ice pack, within 72 hours of collection.

## **SHIPPING:**

Complete 1 requisition form for each specimen. The BCL Requisition Form is found on BCL's opening page or at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/bcl/assets/bcl-requisition-form.pdf>.

- o Complete the requisition form including collection date, date of symptom(s) onset, as well as dates and locations of recent travel.
- o **Note:** Mark COVID-19 & complete all the federally required information in the box.
- If you have a Web Portal account, choose the appropriate matrix (specimen source), then order "COVID19" as the test. Select "Additional Information" & complete all required fields.
- Specimens should be packaged as Category B in an insulated shipping container with frozen ice packs.
- The packaged specimens may be taken to your local county health department to be couriered to the BCL (at no cost). Contact your local county health department to coordinate courier pick up time. OR
- Ship or drive specimens directly to the BCL located at 204 Legends Court, Prattville, AL 36066.

## **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVEILLANCE SUBMISSION ONLY:**

- Previously tested specimens can be submitted for sequencing surveillance in support of public health's COVID response.
- Only sample types listed above will be acceptable.
  - o **If not received at the BCL within 72 hours, specimens must be stored frozen & shipped on dry ice.**
- On the requisition form & during Web Portal ordering, indicate "COVID Sequencing" in "Special Instructions". Include the original testing assay, specimen accession number, Ct value if applicable, & reason for requesting sequencing (ex. reinfection, suspected variant, vaccine breakthrough, etc.).
- Final reports will not be returned to submitters.

## **QUESTIONS:**

If you have questions about specimen collection & shipping, call the BCL at 334-290-6130 or email [clab@adph.state.al.us](mailto:clab@adph.state.al.us).