



Guidance for Coroners and Medical Examiners Specimen Collection for SARS-CoV-2 Testing

Persons with other diagnoses and conditions that explain their deaths do not need to be tested for COVID-19. If there is a history of respiratory illness with no other diagnosis or if the person is a suspected COVID-19 case as a result of exposure history or additional symptoms, please consider testing for SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Regarding the reporting of cause of death on death certificates involving COVID-19, detailed guidance can be found at www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/covid-19.htm. This link can also be accessed through the Help/FAQs tab on the Electronic Death Registration System.

If an autopsy is performed, collection of the following postmortem specimens is recommended:

- Postmortem clinical specimens for testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19:
 - Upper respiratory tract swabs: nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab (NP swab and OP swab)
 - Lower respiratory tract swab: Lung swab from each lung
- Separate clinical specimens for testing of other respiratory pathogens and other postmortem testing as indicated
- Formalin-fixed autopsy tissues from lung, upper airway, and other major organs

If an autopsy is NOT performed, collection of the following postmortem specimens is recommended:

- Postmortem clinical specimens for testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to include only upper respiratory tract swabs: nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab (NP swab and OP swab)
- Separate NP swab and OP swab specimens for testing of other respiratory pathogens

Detailed guidance for postmortem specimen collection can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website in the section: [Collection of Postmortem Clinical and Pathologic Specimens](#)

In addition to postmortem specimens, submission of any remaining clinical specimens (e.g., NP swab, OP swab, sputum, serum, stool) that may have been collected prior to death is recommended. Please refer to [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons Under Investigation \(PUIs\) for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for more information.

Specimen collection kits are available and can be obtained by calling the Center for Emergency Preparedness (CEP) Duty Officer at **334-239-1556**.

The online Novel Coronavirus PUI Form must be completed and can be found at: <https://epiweb.adph.state.al.us/redcap/surveys/?s=TATDDJ8Y88>

The Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) Requisition Form must be completed for each specimen which may require multiple forms to be completed per person. The form can be found at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/bcl/assets/bcl_requisition_form.pdf

NOTE: Prior to sending specimens to the BCL, please notify the BCL at 334-260-3400.

The BCL can perform testing on NP, OP, sputum, and lower respiratory specimens. Testing on any kind of tissues, fixed blocks, and serum specimens requires CDC approval. Following CDC approval, send specimens to the BCL who will forward them to the CDC for testing. The BCL can assist in obtaining the CDC's approval for testing.