COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Handling for Testing at SHC

Note: This guidance covers testing performed at the SHC Virology Lab for COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2) for Stanford Health Care

Below are interim recommendations from Infection Prevention for testing. Recommendations will be updated as needed.

COVID-19 testing will be considered for:

Symptomatic patients or healthcare workers with or without known COVID-19 exposure:
- with influenza-like illness
- OR fever (subjective or T ≥100)
- OR sore throat
- OR cough
- OR shortness of breath
- AND physician judgement

Physicians should have a low threshold to test symptomatic patients or healthcare workers:
- who have had direct contact with a COVID-19 positive patient
- OR who have returned from index countries within 14 days of symptom onset (index countries: China, South Korea, Iran, Italy or Japan)

For patients or healthcare workers being tested in the outpatient setting or occupational health and not requiring hospitalization: Order COVID-19 PCR. The respiratory viral panel or rapid flu/RSV PCR can be ordered at the physician’s discretion.

For patients being admitted to the hospital: Order the respiratory viral panel AND COVID-19 PCR

Guidelines for COVID-19 testing of inpatients admitted with diagnoses other than acute respiratory illness

- For patients hospitalized for two weeks or less and who have fever and/or lower respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, infiltrates or respiratory failure and no alternative explanation, testing for COVID-19 is reasonable.

- For patients hospitalized for more than two weeks prior to the onset of fever and/or respiratory symptoms testing for COVID-19 is not indicated and should not be done unless the patient has been exposed to a known COVID-19 positive individual during the current hospitalization.

- For uncertainty about testing, consider ID consult
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**IMPORTANT:**
- **LABEL ALL SPECIMENS** collected from Patients Under Investigation (PUI) with a neon green “COVID-19 PUI” sticker, regardless of test ordered (e.g. CBC, type & screen).
- Each specimen must be placed in a separate biohazard bag.
- **DO NOT** use the P-Tube for transport.

**Collection Instructions for COVID-19 Testing**

Sample Type and Source – transport all specimens at 2-8°C.

**Preferred:** Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab in individual Viral Transport Media (VTM) or Universal (UTM).

**Acceptable:**
- Oropharyngeal (OP) swab if ordered with an NP swab (Place both swabs in single tube)
- 1 mL Bronchoalveolar Lavage (BAL) fluid. Submit in a sterile container.

**Swab Collection Information**

- Only one swab is needed for both tests, RESPCR2 + SARSCOV2.
- Use only flocked swab.
- Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.
- Place swab immediately into tube containing 2-3 ml of viral or universal transport media. Affix specimen label to tube.

**How to Order COVID-19 Testing in EPIC:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Order Set Name</th>
<th>Single Order/Add-on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500P/300P ED</td>
<td>SHC ED COVID-19 Panel Order set includes: RESPCR2 + SARSCOV2</td>
<td>LABSARSCOV2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHC Inpatient/ITA</td>
<td>2019 Novel Coronavirus (SARS COV-2), RT-PCR Panel Order set includes: RESPCR2 + SARSCOV2</td>
<td>LABSARSCOV2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulatory</td>
<td>SHC AMB COVID-19 Labs Order set includes: RESPCR2 + SARSCOV2</td>
<td>LABSARSCOV2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transport to the Laboratory - DO NOT use the P-Tube**

- Deliver samples STAT to the Laboratory (F17 at 300P) by Courier immediately.
- See Infection Control Pandemic policy for further guidance (PPE requirements for aerosolizing procedures, etc.) at [https://stanfordhealthcare.policytech.com/dotNet/documents/?docid=4158](https://stanfordhealthcare.policytech.com/dotNet/documents/?docid=4158)