COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Submission Guidelines

Healthcare providers should work with their internal policies, incident command, infection preventionists and laboratory personnel to collect specimens and submit/ship them for testing. ISDHL requires all COVID-19 test requisitions to be submitted through its Laboratory Information Management System (LimsNet).

Specimens not submitted through LimsNet will not be tested.

LimsNet Test Order/Requisition:

New users

- To sign up for LimsNet, call the LIMS Help Desk 317-921-5506, or email us at LimsAppSupport@isdh.in.gov
- Please provide the following information:
  - Name of your facility and facility address.
  - Names and email addresses of all individuals who need LimsNet access at your facility.
  - The email body or subject line should read: “Requesting Virology Test Submission Access”.

Existing users: see http://limsnet.isdh.in.gov/

Specimen Collection: Recommended Specimen Type is a Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab

Click here for further information about collection guidelines: Specimens

Label specimens with the patient’s First Name, Last Name, and date of birth. This must match what is entered into LimsNet. Specimens with mis-matched patient identifiers will be cancelled.

Shipping:

Specimens should be shipped Category B, on ice packs, to the mailing address on the LimsNet Cover page.

- Ensure that your package shipping label matches the mailing address on the LIMSNET cover page.
- Specimens will not be received after the normal dock or courier receiving hours. Please keep specimens collected after normal receiving hours refrigerated and deliver during normal receiving hours:
  - Weekdays: 8:15 a.m. - 4:45 p.m., Courier or Shipping
  - Weekends: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Courier Delivery ONLY.
- Testing results will only be reported back to the LimsNet submitter. It will be the responsibility of this entity to relay all laboratory results to the patient’s healthcare provider.

Please call 317-921-5500 or email isdh-lab-info@isdh.IN.gov for more information.
ISDHL COVID-19 FAQ

Specimen Collection

Where can we get test kits? VTM? Swabs? Category B Shippers?
Indicate your supply status on the EMResource web site. EMResource is available to hospitals, laboratories and EMS providers.

This is the mechanism that ISDH is using to help resupply essential items, such as swabs and VTM. Users can add their shortage needs to the comments section and change their PPE status to red. The ISDH Logistics Team is delivering supplies as needed by evaluating our supply, demand, and the status of the facility every-other-day to facilities with a red status. Status should be updated every day.

For LTC facilities needing testing or infection control, please place a Strike Team Request via email.

How do I get an EMResource account?
Request a new EMResource user/account at: https://bit.ly/2TUSwAo

What specimens do the ISDHL want collected?
Nasopharyngeal (synthetic NP swab) is the preferred specimen type but ISDHL can accept OP, sputum, synthetic mid-turbinate swab (mini-tipped swab), nasal swab (both nares) and BAL as well.

VTM is scarce, would it be acceptable to send swabs in PBS or normal saline?
Yes, however, please update your status in EMResource; VTM and swabs may be available for distribution if you need more. VTM is the preferred transport medium.

LimsNet/Test Requisition

Do we have to use LimsNet or can we use the Virology Paper Form?
LimsNet is required and information must be entered in the system before the specimen can be tested.

The LimsNet cover sheet must accompany the specimen. The LimsNet cover sheet must be received before the specimen can be tested. Delays in receipt of this cover sheet will result in reporting delays.

What should I do if I don’t have access to LimsNet?
Please contact the LimsNet Help Desk at 317-921-5506 or limsappsupport@isdh.in.gov.

My patient was authorized for testing at Hospital ABC but I am caring for the patient at Doctor’s Office XYZ. How do I get their test results? Why can’t I see them in LimsNet?
LimsNet results are only visible to the organization that submitted them. You must contact the submitting laboratory for these results.
Specimen Transport/Shipping

LimsNet says my specimen is in transit but FedEx says it was delivered. Was it lost?
There is a short lag time in LimsNet between when a specimen is delivered and the status is updated. Thank you for your patience!

What is the stability of specimens for COVID-19 testing?
Store specimens at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours after collection. If a delay in testing or shipping is expected, store specimens at -70°C or below. If stored at -70°C, specimens must be shipped on dry ice and arrive frozen. Specimens that have thawed in transport will not be tested.

What happens if I cannot deliver my specimen(s) during normal receiving dock hours?
Specimens will not be received after the normal receiving dock or courier hours. These specimens should be refrigerated and deliver during normal receiving dock hours:

Weekdays: 8:15 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
Weekends: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Courier Delivery ONLY

Specimen Rejection

One of our specimens was rejected due to an incorrect date of birth. Is there any way to fix this?
If the date of birth in LimsNet is incorrect, ISDHL allows the submitter to request a change through LimsNet; however, if the date of birth is incorrect on the tube, then a new specimen will need to be collected and resubmitted.

One of our specimens was rejected due to missing a second patient identifier. What does this mean?
Both the LimsNet form and the specimen must be labeled with two patient identifiers. Generally, this is the patient’s First and Last name and date of birth. Specimens received without a second identifier on the tube will be cancelled and discarded. A new specimen will need to be collected.

One of our specimens was rejected due to “leaked in transit”. What does this mean?
This is usually due to the threads on the specimen tube being misaligned with the cap OR not breaking the swab off at the correct point, which puts pressure on the specimen cap and causes the tube to leak. How do we know it leaked? There is VTM in the specimen bag during transit. These are cancelled and discarded automatically. A new specimen will need to be collected.

Testing

What type of testing is ISDHL performing?
ISDHL is performing the CDC’s EUA-approved COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 test as well as the Hologic Panther Aptima SARS-CoV-2 assay.
Reporting

What is the turn-around time for results?
Results will be available within three days of specimen receipt.

Will ISDHL report results to the patient’s healthcare provider?
The ISDHL will only be reporting results back to the LimsNet submitter. It is the responsibility of this entity to relay all laboratory results to the patient’s healthcare provider.

Commercial Testing

How do I report COVID-19 testing results to ISDH?
You should report both positives and negatives (molecular OR serology) the same way you report all other reportable disease conditions to ISDH. This is primarily through electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) through the ISDH NBS system. If your facility reports labs through ELR to ISDH, contact Irene Jameson to set up COVID-19 reporting (317) 233-7684 or ijameson@isdh.in.gov).

If your facility does not report through ELR, please have your infection preventionist (IP) report through a morbidity report. Provide a pdf of the lab report to your IP as they will need to attach this file when submitting their report.

Alternatively, you can fax positive reports to 317-233-7747.

Other

Are COVID-19 IgG/IgM antibody tests (blood/serum) an appropriate test?
See Serology Q&A.
Acceptable versus Unacceptable
Collection Swab Options for COVID-19 Testing

- Swabs with VTM (NP oropharyngeal)
- Swabs with VTM (Nasopharyngeal)
- Mucus Swabs

NOT ACCEPTABLE

- Wooden swab/ cotton tipped applicator
- Swabs with transport tube
- Calcium alginate swabs
- Synthetic swab (place in VTM after collection)
Proper Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab Collection
Quick Reference Guide

- Use nylon flocked tipped, flexible plastic shaft swab
- Don goggles, gloves, mask or other PPE as necessary
- Push the handle end of the swab (A) toward the ceiling such that it stays on the floor of the sinus cavity
- Watch that the swab tip doesn’t stop at the lower sinus ric
  - NOTE: This happens frequently and folks believe they are at the nasopharynx.
    - As you know, the nasopharynx is located at the very back of the sinus cavity (near the front of the ear) as indicated by the swab tip placement in the photo above.
- Rotate swab gently ½ turn and back to collect epithelial cells and gently remove
- Place swabs directly into viral transport media (VTM)
- Label all specimens as “Nasopharyngeal” or “NP”
  - Do NOT label as “Nasal”, these are unacceptable for testing
- Store refrigerated until ready to transport to ISDH laboratories

Document last updated: 06/13/20
SENDER (from): ____________________________________________________________________

CONSIGNEE (to): The Indiana State Department of Health Laboratories

NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHIPMENT:

Name: __________________________________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

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BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE CATEGORY B