Guidance for COVID-19 Specimen Submission to the Public Health Laboratory

**Prior Authorization:** Facilities wishing to submit COVID-19 specimens for testing must have prior authorization before submitting COVID-19 specimens for testing at the Arkansas Public Health Lab (APHL).

Email ADH.HAI@arkansas.gov or call 501-280-4368 for prior authorization and COVID-19 collection kit information.

**Specimen Collection:** Collect one Anterior Nasal or Nasopharyngeal swab per most current CDC Guidance and place the swab in a single vial with 2-3 ml of Viral/Universal Transport Media (VTM/UTM), 1-3mL of Normal Saline, 1-3mL of Liquid Amies Transport Media, or 1-3mL of Molecular Transport Media (MTM).

- **Swab Requirements:**
  - Use only sterile synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts.
  - Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts.
  - Do not use foam tipped swabs or swabs placed in culture media.
  - Place the swab immediately into sterile collection kit.
  - **Label the specimen with two unique identifiers,** such as the patient’s full name and date of birth.
    - If your specimen is not properly labeled, it may be rejected.

- **Transport Requirements:**
  - Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and ship cold with cold packs.
    - **Warm specimens will be rejected.**

**Test Request Forms:** Complete a COVID-19 Test Request Form or use the Lab Web Portal to generate a test request (Create a Lab Web Portal account to view your facility’s COVID-19 results by selecting New User Registration on the Lab Web Portal website).

- **COVID-19 Test Request Form:** Complete all fields
  - Must have the submitting facility’s name and correct phone & fax number for results.
- Requestor must be a licensed medical practitioner (i.e. physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, etc.)

  - Ensure the **Patient Name** and **Date of Birth** on COVID-19 Test Request Form are correct and match the specimen tube.
  - Place COVID-19 Test Request in the outer pocket of the specimen bag. Do not place the paperwork inside the bag with the specimen.

**Local Health Units: continue to use Common Customer to request COVID-19.**

**Specimen Shipping:** Ship cold as Category B (UN 3373) to the AR-PHL. Write **ATTN: Molecular** on the outside of the box containing COVID-19 specimens.

Arkansas Dept. of Health-Public Health Laboratory ATTN: Molecular
201 South Monroe Street, Little Rock, AR 72205

**OR**
Package as a Category B specimen and bring to the nearest county Local Health Unit (LHU) for shipment. **LHUs cannot accept unpackaged specimens.**

**OR**
Specimens can be dropped off at the APHL Specimen Receiving located at the back of the building (off of Palm Street).

**Turnaround Time:** maximum of 7 business days. Due to 72-hour testing window, it
is recommended that specimens be brought to the APHL as soon as possible after collection.

Reports:

- SARS-CoV-2 finalized reports will be faxed to the submitter or are accessible via your facility’s Lab Web Portal in real time.

Local Health Unit reports will electronically attach to patients’ EHR.

**APHL: 501-661-2220** (General, Quality Assurance, & Lab Web Portal Questions)

**HAI Team: 501-280-4368** (COVID-19 Testing Prior-Approval)