Diagnostic Testing

Steps for COVID-19

March 16, 2020

Please be aware that testing has increased throughout the country. As such, supplies (swabs, transport media, lab test reagents) are becoming limited so prioritization of who to test for COVID-19 is critical. Our current strategy is focused on patients in the hospital, patients with highest risk exposures and special populations who are either more prone to complications or have important public health ramifications.

This document serves as guidance for diagnostic testing for SARS-COV2 (COVID-19). The test used by the Central Lab was designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and developed for internal use by the Intermountain Central Laboratory. Performance characteristics of the test were assessed in accordance with guidance provided under the FDA EUA and our test will be submitted for EUA review. We will continue to monitor the evolving diagnostic landscape and adjust our strategies as needed to meet the demands of our community and caregivers.

Which labs can test for COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

A. Effective immediately on 3/16/2020, the Intermountain Central Lab will be testing for SARS-CoV-2.

How should tests be ordered?

A. If ordered in iCentra, enter COV19 test code and complete the iCentra decision algorithm to place the order. You will not be able to order without completing the questionnaire.
    a. If decision tree results in test recommended, you will be able to proceed with the ordering process.
    b. If decision tree results in a test not recommended, contact the SCORE Hotline to discuss the case and revisit the decision.

B. If ordering independent of iCentra, providers must fill out the Patient History Form and submit it with the specimen. The most current version of this form can be found on www.testmenu.com/Intermountain under COV19 testing. If the diagnostic algorithm determines that testing is not indicated, this means that the patient does not currently meet criteria for testing. Please encourage strict self-isolation and continue to monitor symptoms. Exceptions will be uncommon due to be limited testing capacity. As supplies and capacity improve, we will update these recommendations.

How should samples be collected?

1. For COVID-19 testing, collect one NP swab collected from both nasopharyngeal areas and submit in appropriate media. UTM, VTM, M4 are acceptable at this time.
2. If other viral testing is needed (FLUPCR, FLU/RSV PCR, RFAPCR) there is no need to collect an additional specimen. ENTER requested test as an “ADD ON” and we will use the submitted sample for testing.

Note: A positive RFAPCR or FLUPCR result does not necessarily rule out COVID-19 in high risk patients. Please continue to consider epidemiologic risk factors to guide whether additional COVID-19 testing is needed.

What other samples can be used for COVID-19 testing?

- Lower respiratory tract samples:
    1. BAL or tracheal aspirate: Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container. Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and coordinate overnight shipment to CDC on ice pack with UDOH.
    2. Sputum: Have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container. Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C and coordinate overnight shipment to CDC on ice pack with UDOH.

What precautions should be taken for COVID-19 testing?

A. PAPR or N95 respirator with face shield if available plus gloves and fluid impervious gown.
B. If PAPR/N95 are unavailable, can use surgical mask with eye protection (eg. Face shield with procedure mask OR procedure mask with goggles.

What is the projected turnaround time for test results?

At this time, we project between 24-48 hours BUT test volume is likely to overwhelm our capacity so TAT may be longer. As supply constraints are resolved and more instruments are brought online, we anticipate the TAT to improve. This is a new laboratory test, so time is required to become efficient and to receive supplies. Please be patient with results and refrain from contacting the lab to inquire about TAT. If more than 3 days has elapsed and results are unavailable, please contact the lab to enquire.

References:

3. Intermountain Healthcare COVID-19 Guidance
4. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html