
LAB ALERT: COVID-19 Testing at Nebraska Medicine

Date: April 16, 2020

Dear Regional Pathology Services Clients,

UNMC and its partner Nebraska Medicine have been working tirelessly to expand the testing capacity for COVID-19 testing in Nebraska. In an effort to keep clients informed of all changes related to COVID-19 testing we are sending this update that includes methodology and supply updates.

Test Code:

[COV19 for COVID-19 Testing](#)

COVID-19 PCR testing for Regional Pathology Services is performed in both the Molecular (LDT) and Microbiology (Roche Cobas) laboratories. Both methods will use the COV19 test order code to allow the flexibility of using both laboratories as test volumes increase. RPS will not notify clients of the testing lab utilized, as both methods will be the same fee.

Supplies:

The innovation at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine has resulted in 3D printed nasopharyngeal swabs and internal production of viral transport media made in our Biologics Laboratory, allowing RPS to supply more collection kits to our clients.

- Order using the Online Supply Site [Regional Lab Online Supply Orders](#)
 - Media and Swabs, *See* MICRO114
 - Nasopharyngeal swabs only, *See* MICRO118
 - Transport media only, *See* MICRO122
- Supplies may be limited. If appropriate, please contact your Local Health Department for testing approval and supplies.

Note: vendor, container and media type may change based on availability.

Specimen Requirements:

- Nasopharyngeal swabs are the preferred specimen source. Nasal swabs are not acceptable.
 - Other specimen sources (BAL, sputum, tracheal aspirates) will be directed to our molecular laboratory for testing using the same COV19 order code.
- Viral transport media (VTM), universal transport media (UTM), MicroTest® media, phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) and sterile physiological saline are acceptable transport media. eSwabs in Amies are acceptable, but due to the limited volume of media in each tube, testing may be canceled if a repeat is necessary. The order of preference is:
 - Commercial viral or universal transport media
 - RPS/UNMC provided viral transport media
 - PBS
 - Sterile physiological saline
 - eSwab in Amies

Contact your RPS Account Manager for approval of media or swabs not included in the list above.

Result Reporting:

The result is qualitative and reported as detected or not detected.

Regional Pathology Services will call all detected (positive) results following our current critical result reporting procedures.

Expected TAT is 24-48 hours from receipt in the laboratory but could vary depending on the volume of testing.

Storage/Transport:

Transport refrigerated at 2-8°C. If delivery and processing exceed 48 hours, specimens should be transported frozen in dry ice.

Unacceptable Specimens:

Dry swabs or specimens not in the media mentioned above. Ambient specimens. Calcium alginate swabs; cotton swabs with wooden shaft; received refrigerated more than 48 hours after collection; swabs in gel transport.

When preparing COVID-19 specimens, please make sure to snap off the shaft of the swab at the scored indicator line, leaving the flocked end of the swab inside the collection tube. Securely recap the collection tube. Please work with your collection staff to determine the appropriate procedure for cutting swabs that do not have scored indicator lines. The shaft of the swab should not be in contact with the lid, as this prevents a secure seal. Do not place films, such as paraffin film (parafilm), between the tube and the lid or around the lid of the transport container. Failure to prepare specimens correctly may cause leakage and **will prevent specimens from being tested.**

Billing:

Continue to use CPT code 87635 for commercial payer claims and U0002 for Medicare claims. Client invoices will reflect COV19B for the Roche Cobas testing and NECOV B for the Molecular Pathology testing; the client fee will be the same for both methods.

Please note that this information changes frequently. We will inform clients of updates as they become available.

If you have any questions or issues with these changes, please contact client services at 402-559-6420 and ask to speak with one of the client coordinators.
