

LAB ALERT #5: SARS-CoV-2 TESTING UPDATES (3/12/20)

The following is a summary of recent changes to SDPHL SARS-CoV-2 testing guidelines. **Critical changes are in red.** Additional guidance regarding specimen handling and storage, packaging and shipping, specimen rejection criteria, SARS-CoV-2 testing and results, and result reporting can be found in LAB ALERT #4 on the SDPHL webpage. Updates regarding a new SDPHL SARS-CoV-2 test requisition will be provided in LAB ALERT #6.

Preferred Specimens:

- **Nasopharyngeal Swab (NP):** 1 (one) nasopharyngeal swab should be collected by swabbing both sides of the nasopharynx. The NP swab should be placed in a single tube of viral transport medium (VTM).
- **Oropharyngeal Swab:** no longer recommended
- **Lower respiratory specimen:** sputum is acceptable but only if the patient is producing; do not induce.

Specimen Collection Kits:

- Collection kits include 1 (one) flocked swab, 1 (one) vial of viral transport medium, and one (1) sterile sputum cup.
- Duplicate specimens must be collected if respiratory panel and SARS-CoV-2 testing are requested.

Testing for Common Respiratory Pathogens:

- COVID-19 PUIs should be tested for common respiratory agents by the facility.
- SDPHL offers the Respiratory Pathogens Panel (RPP) for facilities that cannot test for common respiratory agents.
 - **RPP testing should only be ordered by those facilities that lack the capability to test for common respiratory agents.**
 - **RPP testing should only be ordered for patients with moderate to severe disease.**
 - There is no charge for this testing.

Testing Schedule and Turn-Around Time

- **SDPHL plans to expand SARS-CoV-2 testing to include Saturday and Sunday. Additional updates on testing schedule and courier service are forthcoming.**
- **Due to recent surge, turn-around time for SARS-CoV-2 testing could be up to 36 hours and TAT for RPP could be up to 48 hours.**

For any questions regarding the information provided in this LAB ALERT, contact the South Dakota Public Health Laboratory at 605-773-3368.

Please distribute this LAB ALERT to others in your facility that may need this information.