

# Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Laboratories

## COVID-19 PCR Specimen Labeling, Storage, Transport, and Resulting Instructions

### Labeling Clinical Specimens:

Always label specimens at the time of collection. The specimen tube labels must include at minimum the patient **full legal name** (First and Last) or unique identifier, **time and date of collection**. A second identifier, such as date of birth, can also be indicated on the specimen tube.

The IDPH Laboratories do not provide labels for the vial. We advise to use the label on the tube (if applicable), chart labels or blank address labels. Ensure specimen is properly sealed. Align the grooves in the tube with the cap first before screw-capping to obtain an optimal seal. Specimen may be sealed with parafilm to ensure no leakage during shipment.

### Order or requisition form for Testing

The order or requisition form accompanying the specimen must include the Full legal name or unique patient identifier (exactly matching the patient identification on the specimen tube); the date and time of specimen collection; the Date of Birth, the sex, and the specimen type.

### Storage after Collection:

*All specimens collected for COVID-19 PCR testing must be refrigerated (2-8°C) promptly after collection and couriered/shipped on cold packs to arrive in the lab within 72 hours of collection. If a delay beyond 72 hrs is unavoidable, specimens must be stored frozen (-20°C or below) and couriered/shipped on dry ice to the IDPH Laboratory.*

### Shipping/Delivering Clinical Specimens:

To ship/courier a specimen for testing to the IDPH Laboratory, follow the instructions below.

1. Place the labeled specimen in a biohazard bag. (The lab cannot accept unlabeled specimens). Place the completed requisition form or order form printed directly from the ETOR portal in **outside pocket/sleeve** of biohazard bag. (For safety reasons, the form cannot be placed in contact with the specimen in the specimen compartment. You can place multiple biohazard bags, each containing an individual specimen and requisition form, inside of a larger biohazard bag for delivery.)
2. Disinfect the biohazard bag holding the specimens so that it is safe to handle.
3. Place frozen ice pack(s) inside a transport cooler or biological shipping container (cardboard enclosed Styrofoam box). **DO NOT USE WET ICE**. If no ice pack is available, frozen bottles of water can be used to maintain specimen temperature. If transporting via courier to a lab, it is recommended a reusable specimen transport cooler with a sealable lid is used rather than a Styrofoam cooler. Ensure the transport cooler is labeled with the sender's address.
4. Place the sealed biohazard bag on top of the frozen ice pack(s). Use packing material to fill dead space.
5. If a biological shipping container is used, close the box and seal with packing tape.
6. Place address label on top of shipping container. If transporting via courier, a shipping label is not necessary. Instead, write on the shipping container the name of the submitting facility.
7. A "UN 3373" label is required when shipping. Place "UN 3373 Category B" label on the side of the shipping container. If transporting via courier, no UN3373 Category B label is - required.
8. Disinfect the outside of the shipping container/transport cooler so that it is safe to handle by the courier and laboratory staff.

### Shipping Services and Delivery Days:

Deliveries from all carriers are accepted, however, FedEx or UPS are usually used for guaranteed next day delivery. IDPH can provide Shipping labels for the Springfield, Carbondale or Chicago laboratory per request. The return service labels

provided by the IDPH Laboratories for Next Day Air Service, which excludes Saturday deliveries. Please consult with your shipping service to ensure the package will be in accordance with the “Storage after Collection” section. Record tracking number to be able to monitor your shipment.

**Results:**

Laboratory results will be sent via FAX to the number listed on the submission form or results are provided in the ETOR portal, only if samples are submitted using the portal. IDPH is unable to provide test results for specimens tested at any other reference lab. IDPH cannot provide results directly to patients.

**IDPH Rejection Criteria:**

Rejection criteria include but are not limited to those with: mismatched requisitions (name on specimen does not match that on the specimen), missing appropriate IDPH submission form, specimens without patient identifiers, specimens stored or shipped incorrectly, specimens collected using expired transport media, leaking specimens, specimens with insufficient quantity for testing. Failure to respond to a request from the IDPH laboratory for missing information may result in a rejection. IDPH Laboratories makes every effort to contact submitters to resolve specimen issues before rejecting specimens.