**This is a rapidly changing process. Please go to our COVID-19 page https://slph.ncpublichealth.com/bioterrorism/2019-ncov.asp for the most current information.**

### COVID-19 Specimen Collection Kit Contents

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### Specimen Collection

The specimen should be collected as soon as possible once a person under investigation (PUI) is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset. Health care providers or public health personnel collecting specimens should wear recommended PPE as described in the March 12 NCDHHS Interim Guidance for Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) While Caring for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). For NCSLPH diagnostic testing to detect COVID-19, only a nasopharyngeal swab should be collected.

- **How to collect the nasopharyngeal swab:** Place the swab into the nostril parallel to the palate until resistance is encountered. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. Place the tip into the vial of sterile viral transport medium (VTM). Aseptically cut off the applicator stick so that it does not protrude above the rim of the vial and cap. **LABEL THE VIAL CONTAINING THE SWAB, NOT THE CONICAL TUBE.** The label should include: two unique identifiers (i.e., patient’s name and date of birth), date of collection, and “NP”.

Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C until ready for packaging. **Specimens must be sent immediately using overnight delivery and not batched.** Specimens can be refrigerated up to 72 hours. If longer storage is required (>72 hours), store at -70°C and ship on dry ice.

For additional guidance on collection, handling, and testing of clinical specimens please see the following:

- Our online Handout for Collecting and Shipping COVID-19 Specimens to the NCSLPH

### Specimen Packaging and Shipment

Place specimen vial back into the conical tube with padding. Place the tube into the plastic Ziploc-style bag sent with the swab. Place 1 – 3 specimens in the Styrofoam cooler with 2 frozen cold packs. Tape the Cat B labels on the exterior of the package.

All specimen submissions must have a completed NCSLPH COVID-19 Submission Form, which the submitter EIN (facility tax #), submitter (facility) name. Specimens should be shipped as UN3373 Category B, cutting out and attaching the printed labels provided. **DO NOT SHIP USING THE STATE COURIER.**

### Specimen Rejection Criteria

1. Incomplete NCSLPH COVID-19 Submission Forms (including missing/incorrect EIN), 2. Incomplete specimen labeling on the swab vial, 3. Specimens not kept at 2-8°C (≤72 hours) or if specimens have not been frozen at -70°C and they are >72 hours old, 5. Inappropriate specimen type, 6. Insufficient specimen volume for testing.

### UPS Label Instructions

Use the new North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health COVID-19 Return Shipping Label Procedure to generate a label using the UPS Complete View Returns system. Instructions were emailed to your Local Health Department Director and were enclosed in an envelope affixed to the side of your kit shipment. This system can ONLY be used by local health departments to send COVID-19 specimens to the NCSLPH for testing. If local health departments are in need of written guidance please email a request to slph.covid19@dhhs.nc.gov.

**Tracking information no longer needs to be forwarded to the NCSLPH.**

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