



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Laboratory Testing in Victoria

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been confirmed as the causative agent of a respiratory outbreak first diagnosed in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019.

The current definition for a suspected case is travel to Wuhan within 14 days of symptom onset AND fever or history of fever AND respiratory symptoms. Incubation time is probably 7-14 days.

Approval for testing

Testing for Coronavirus infection (COVID-19) no longer requires approval by the Department of Human Health and Services (DHHS).

When a patient has an illness that is compatible with the novel coronavirus infection and has travelled overseas, testing can be considered. Notify the DHHS for advice on whether testing should be actively considered. To obtain advice, telephone 1300 651 160, 24 hours a day. The testing of patients who have been notified to DHHS and meet the suspected case definition will be prioritised by the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) for testing.

Specimens for testing

Australian Clinical Labs Collection Centres will not be collecting the samples for coronavirus, samples collected by practitioners can be submitted to Clinical Labs and we will refer on to VIDRL for testing.

The following specimens are recommended to be sent to Clinical Labs, to be forwarded to VIDRL, when requesting COVID-19:

1. From the upper respiratory tract - nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal flocced swabs (x2).
2. From the lower respiratory tract - sputum or bronchial washings/lavage and
3. Blood (serum) for storage for serology at a later date.

Specimen collection

When collecting a nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal specimen:

- Use droplet and contact precautions, which means a single-use face mask, eye protection and gown and gloves. Collect 2 flocced swabs.

When collecting lower respiratory specimen(s):

- Use contact and airborne precautions, which means a P2 respirator, eye protection, gown and gloves. Collect in a room with negative pressure if available.

VIDRL testing algorithm

Specimens will be tested by a pan-coronavirus assay, run twice daily with results available at 6-24 hours. A real time Wuhan Coronavirus assay will report COVID-19 detected or not detected.

Repeat testing

This could be contemplated when there is a high index of clinical suspicion, but should be discussed with the clinical team and DHHS Victoria prior to collection of samples.

Links

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus>

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/news-and-events/healthalerts/pneumonia-cluster-china>

[https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected)

Please note we are closely monitoring this situation and will update the above as further information becomes available.

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