



How to Test:

Nasopharyngeal testing is recommended in the outpatient setting, and a sputum sample if possible.

Oropharyngeal testing is no longer recommended. Commercial testing is available through [Quest Diagnostics](#) and [Labcorp](#).

Nasopharyngeal Swab:

Dacron swabs or Rayon swabs can be used for either lab. [Labcorp](#) prefers an NP swab with an orange cap though any Dacron swab can be used. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.

Patient should sit with their head tilted back 70°. Gently insert NP swab into one nostril along the septum floor of the nose extending straight back until the posterior nasal pharynx is reached (distance from nostrils to external opening of ear). Rotate the swab several times while the swab is in contact with the nasal pharyngeal wall ([Labcorp Guidelines on Obtaining Specimen](#)) or at least leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. ([CDC Guidelines on Collecting Specimens](#)).

Once swab is obtained, move the swab to an appropriate transport medium. [Labcorp](#) recommends a universal transport medium (UTM) with a purple top. [Quest](#) swabs can be transported in a UTM, M4, or VCM media.

Sputum:

Have the patient rinse their mouth with water and then expectorate a deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.

Storage & Transportation:

Specimens should be frozen or can be refrigerated at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours. Transportation should be through courier service through Labcorp or Quest.

The testing code for Labcorp is 139900, and Quest is 39433. The turn around time is typically 3-4 days.

Infection Control Precautions:

PPE protection is recommended for providers & staff caring for patients with a high suspicion of having COVID-19, which includes masks, eye protection, gowns and gloves. Due to a shortage of N95 masks, face masks are an acceptable alternative. N95 masks should be prioritized for procedures likely to generate a high concentration of respiratory aerosols (e.g., intubation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

“Any provider who develops fever and cough is recommended to immediately stop working until fever has resolved for 24 hours. Providers who are concerned that they may have COVID-19 due to symptoms or suspected exposure to COVID-19 are encouraged to talk with their occupational health provider or OCHCA at **714-834-8180** to discuss potential COVID-19 testing.” (OCHCA)

If you Have a Suspected Patient:

If you have a suspected patient with COVID-19, they must be instructed to self-isolate at home until results are available. ([Home Isolation Guidelines](#))

Report all laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases immediately to the Orange County Health Care Agency at 714-834-8180 (after hours 714-628-7008) (do not share these numbers with patients).