

NYP Laboratory COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) Testing

Updated March 23, 2020

Incidence of COVID-19 continues to increase across the Greater New York area. **The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has issued a health advisory discouraging COVID-19 testing in patients with illness that does not require hospitalization. Patients with COVID-like illness not requiring hospitalization should be instructed to stay home since testing does not change clinical management or recommendations about staying home. This includes health care personnel (HCP) who are mildly to moderately ill.** Given the high incidence of community transmission at this time, HCP with compatible symptoms should be assumed to have COVID-19. The rationale for these changes is to minimize transmission to others, including other HCP that may occur as a result of seeking testing as well as to preserve personal protective equipment (PPE), collection swabs and transport media so that testing can be prioritized for hospitalized patients.

Testing for COVID-19 **should be considered** for patients who have **ANY symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (see below) AND** meet one of the following criteria:

Symptoms	Patients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Cough • Shortness of breath • Sore throat • Myalgia • Diarrhea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently hospitalized or will require inpatient hospitalization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk outpatients where results would impact their ability to get urgent clinical care (e.g., chemotherapy or radiation oncology)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients being discharged to a congregate setting

COVID-19 testing is NOT recommended for asymptomatic individuals.

COVID-19 TESTING PROCESS:

- **Order test:** For campuses where EHR ordering is available*:
 - Place an order in the appropriate EHR

**For other campuses, use the appropriate campus-specific process to order*
- **Print Label:** Once the order is placed, the patient’s nurse will be able to print a specimen label as is routinely done for other clinical specimens. Specimens received WITHOUT A LABEL will be rejected.

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SPECIMEN COLLECTION:

- USE DROPLET/CONTACT PRECAUTIONS WHEN COLLECTING SPECIMENS. **N-95 respirator is NOT REQUIRED FOR SAMPLE COLLECTION**
- **Use a viral transport media kit to collect a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab.** Swab posterior nasopharynx (NOT anterior nares), leave swab in place for few seconds to absorb secretions. Insert the swab into the vial of viral transport media, break off the stick.

**PLEASE PLACE SWAB INTO TUBE FOR TRANSPORT**

- While in the room, place the label on the specimen tube. Place the specimen tube in a clear specimen bag.
- Hand-off specimens to a team member outside of the room who is wearing clean gloves.
- **HAND DELIVER** specimens to the laboratory. Specimens will then be delivered to the Columbia or Cornell lab for processing.