

<b>Section:</b> UTMB On-line Documentation	<b>01.23 - Policy</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Infection Control & Healthcare Epidemiology Policies and Procedures	
<b>Topic:</b> 01.23 – Collecting and Handling of Laboratory Specimens in Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)	<b>2021 - Author</b>

## **01.23 – Collecting and Handling of Laboratory Specimens in Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

**Purpose** To facilitate safe transport of laboratory specimens obtained from persons with confirmed or suspected coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

**Audience** All employees of UTMB hospitals, clinics, outpatient surgical centers, contract workers, licensed independent practitioners, and students who obtain body fluid specimens.

**Policy** Any collection and handling of specimens obtained from patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should follow standard precautions.

**A. Specimen Collection** Dedicated medical equipment should be used when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.

All non-dedicated, non-disposable medical equipment used for patient care should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer’s instructions and facility policies.

Ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly.

Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures are appropriate for SARS-CoV-2 in healthcare settings, including those patient-care areas in which aerosol generating procedures are performed.

Hand hygiene with an alcohol-based sanitizer of at least a 60% alcohol or hand washing should always be performed before and after collection of samples.

**Direct** For healthcare providers collecting specimens or working within 6 feet of patients suspected to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, maintain proper infection control and use recommended personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes an N95 or higher-level respirator (or facemask if a respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown.

**Indirect** For healthcare providers who are handling specimens, but are not directly involved in collection (e.g. handling self-collected specimens) and not working within 6 feet of the patient, follow Standard Precautions. Healthcare providers should wear a form of source control (face mask) at

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all times while in the healthcare facility.

## **B. Specimen Handling**

Single bagging of collected specimens is adequate.

Decontaminate work surfaces and equipment with an appropriate EPA-approved disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Hand hygiene should always be performed after manipulating and transport of samples.

### **References:**

1. Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 23, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>.
2. Interim Guidelines for Collecting and Handling of Clinical Specimens for COVID-19 Testing. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 26, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>.
3. Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. June 11, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html#specimen-packing-shipping>.