7 Steps to Submit Suspicious Samples for SARS Testing

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently outlined seven steps for submitting specimens for enzyme immunoassay (EIA) for detecting antibodies to the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) in serum specimens, and a reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test for detecting viral RNA in respiratory specimens. The specimens are submitted to state and local public health laboratories.

Note: All the forms with specific web page addresses also can be found by going to the CDC SARS web page for clinicians at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/clinicians.htm. These are the seven steps:

1. First report any suspect or probable case of SARS to your state or local health department immediately. Health department approval may be needed prior to testing being performed.

2. Because these assays are experimental, it is strongly advised that health care providers use the informed consent forms provided by the CDC and obtain written consent from patients prior to collection of specimens for testing. If testing by both methods is requested, please complete both the EIA informed consent form and the RT-PCR consent form for each patient. If testing by only one of the methods is desired, complete the consent form for that method only. (Although not optimal, if for whatever reason the informed consent process is not used and written informed consent is not obtained, the specimens still can be submitted to the laboratory for testing.)
- For the EIA informed consent form, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/lab/eia/consent.htm.
- For the RT-PCR consent form, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/lab/rtpcr/consent.htm.

3. Please note that each consent form has two sections for the patient's signature. The first section is for the patient's consent for SARS testing to be performed at the state or local public health laboratory. The second section is for the patient's consent for long-term storage of any remaining portion of the specimen after SARS testing.

4. Collect the appropriate specimens for SARS laboratory testing: acute-phase blood for the EIA, and respiratory specimens (i.e., nasopharyngeal wash or aspirate, nasopharyngeal or throat swabs) for the RT-PCR test.
- For specific instructions on specimen collection, go to the CDC's web site: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/specimen_collection_sars2.htm.
- For specific instructions for specimen packing/transport, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/packingspecimens sars.htm.

5. Submit specimens with consent form(s) and a completed specimen submission form to your state or local public health laboratory for testing.
- To get a submission form, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/pdf/specimensubmissionform-sars.pdf.
- For a resource list, go to: www.cdc.gov/other.htm.

6. Final test results, with a fact sheet for interpreting SARS, EIA, and RT-PCR results, and a patient information and consent for long-term storage and future testing sheet for the EIA and/or the RT-PCR will be provided to you through your state or local public health laboratory or the state health department.
- For information on interpreting SARS results, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/clinicians.htm.
- For information on interpreting EIA results, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/lab/eia/participant.htm.
- For information on interpreting RT-PCR results, go to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/lab/rtpcr/participant.htm.

7. If the patient consents, leftover specimens will be stored at the CDC for future SARS-related research. CDC will report the results of any future tests that may be relevant to your patient's health to the submitting health care provider. You will be responsible for providing the test results to your patient.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta.