

Ebola Virus Specimen Testing Frequently Asked Questions

December 5, 2014

1. Introduction

To provide clinical laboratory support in the event of a case of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in New Hampshire, guidance for sample types, testing, specimen submission forms and packaging & shipping of specimens is provided in this FAQ.

Any suspect case of EVD or individual identified as having potential contact to a case of EVD in West Africa must first be immediately reported to the NH DPHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 (after hours 603-271-5300). If testing is warranted, the NH Public Health Laboratories (PHL) will arrange for courier pickup at the affected hospital laboratory. The courier will deliver the specimen to the NH Public Health Laboratories.

2. What if Ebola testing is indicated?

Specimen type(s) approved for FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Ebola PCR

A minimum of two vials, total volume of 4mL whole blood in plastic collection tubes should be collected for testing for Ebola virus. Do not submit specimens in glass containers or in heparinized tubes. Whole blood preserved with EDTA is preferred but whole blood preserved with sodium polyanethol sulfonate (SPS), citrate, or with clot activator is acceptable. Do not centrifuge or open collection tubes. Specimens should immediately be prepared for transport, and kept at 2-8°C on cold-packs.

3. How should the sample be packaged for courier pick up?

Specimens should be packaged without attempting to open collection tubes or aliquot specimens.

Package specimens following the basic triple packaging system which consists of a primary container (a sealable specimen bag) wrapped with absorbent material, secondary container (watertight, leak-proof), and an outer package.

Additional guidance can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-specimen-collection-submission-patients-suspected-infection-ebola.html>

4. What is the turnaround time for the Ebola PCR test?

A presumptive PCR result indicating the presence or absence of Ebola Zaire RNA will be completed in 4-6 hrs from specimen receipt at the PHL. If test results are positive, the duplicate sample will be shipped to CDC for confirmatory testing. CDC has typically reported results within 24 hours.

5. What specimen submissions forms should I use to submit a specimen to the NH Public Health Laboratories?

Standard labeling should be applied for each specimen (i.e., two identifiers). Use the NH PHL specimen requisition form located at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/lab/documents/labrequisition.pdf> and request “Ebola PCR” in the “Other Test Requested or Additional Comments” section at the bottom of the requisition.

6. Should routine testing of specimens be disrupted or discontinued?

No. Concurrent with CDC guidelines, clinical facilities should continue to provide routine testing of patient samples as long as strict adherence to proper PPE usage is followed. Following NH PHL presumptive Ebola results, CDC and state health officials will consult with the healthcare personnel to answer specimen handling /testing specific to the patient’ needs and facility capabilities. The CDC website has detailed information on how US clinical laboratories can safely manage routine testing of specimens from person under investigation (PUI) for Ebola virus disease at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safe-specimen-management.html>