

### Authorization Process for Submitting MERS-CoV Specimens

- Pre-authorization **and** epidemiology consultation must be obtained before specimens will be tested by ISDH Labs. Unauthorized specimens will NOT be tested.
- Prior to calling, collect the following information: name, date of birth, travel history (including dates, locations, and mode(s) of travel), signs and symptoms (current), illness onset date with signs/symptoms and current patient status.
- For authorization during normal business hours contact the ISDH Surveillance and Investigation Division at 317-233-7125 or Reema Patel at 317-234-2809. If after hours, call the ISDH Duty Officer at 317-233-1325. Advise person answering the phone that you are requesting a MERS-CoV consult and guidance in specimen submission.
- Upon authorization, facility will be given an authorization number that should be included in Section 7 of the Virology submission form under Influenza Sentinel Physician Number. **All unauthorized specimens will not be tested.**
- Specimens will be submitted using LIMSNET. To sign up for a LIMSNET account, the ISDH Lab can be contacted at the LIMS HelpDesk 317-921-5506 or 1-888-535-0011.
- If LIMSNET is unavailable, use the virology request form State Form 35212 (R6/9-09) located at: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Submission.pdf>
- Specimen collection guidance is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/downloads/guidelines-clinical-specimens.pdf>

#### Definitions:

##### Patient Under Investigation

A patient under investigation (PUI) is a person with the following characteristics:

-fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and pneumonia or acute respiratory illness (based on clinical or radiological evidence);

##### AND EITHER

-**history of travel** from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula within 14 days before symptom onset; *Countries considered in or near the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen.*

##### OR

- close contact (*Close contact is defined as any person who provided care for the patient, including a healthcare worker or family member, or had similarly close physical contact; or b) any person who stayed at the same place (e.g. lived with, visited) as the patient while the patient was ill*) with a symptomatic traveler who developed fever and acute respiratory illness (not necessarily pneumonia) within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula;

**OR**

- is a member of a cluster of patients with severe acute respiratory illness (e.g. fever and pneumonia requiring hospitalization) of unknown etiology in which MERS-CoV is being evaluated, in consultation with state and local health departments.

**OR**

- history of being in a healthcare facility (as a patient, worker or visitor) in or near the Arabian Peninsula or South Korea within 14 days before symptom onset

\*\*\*If you suspect a patient is infected with MERS-CoV, immediately place the person in isolation, and use full respiratory and contact precautions while in contact with the patient, including physical exams, radiology studies, and collection of laboratory specimens. Standard, Contact and Airborne precautions are recommended.

**Specimens Types:**

Click here for further information about collection guidelines:

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/downloads/guidelines-clinical-specimens.pdf>

1. Bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate, pleural fluid
2. Sputum
3. Nasopharyngeal swab
4. Oropharyngeal swab
5. Serum (for rRT-PCR testing)
6. Stool

**Non-authorized specimens will NOT be tested.**

**AUTHORIZED Specimens:**

Authorized specimens can be sent in Monday-Thursday, or as directed to:

Indiana State Department of Health Laboratories (Virology)  
550 W. 16th Street, Suite B  
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Specimens from suspected MERS cases must be packaged, shipped, and transported according to the current edition of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations at [http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/dgr/Pages/infectious\\_substances.aspx](http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/dgr/Pages/infectious_substances.aspx). Shipments from outside of the United States may require an importation permit that can be obtained from CDC.

Specimens should be stored and shipped at the temperatures indicated above. If samples are unable to be shipped within 72 hours of collection, they should be stored at -70°C and shipped on dry ice. When shipping frozen specimen from long distances or from international locations, it is best to use a combination of dry ice and frozen gel ice-packs. The gel ice-packs will remain frozen for a day or two after the dry ice has dissipated.

All specimens must be pre-packed to prevent breakage and spillage. Specimen containers should be sealed with Parafilm® and placed in ziplock bags. Place enough absorbent material to absorb the entire contents of the Secondary Container (containing Primary Container) and separate the Primary Containers (containing specimen) to prevent breakage. Send specimens with cold packs or other refrigerant blocks that are self-contained, not actual wet ice. This prevents leaking and the appearance of a spill. When large numbers of specimens are being shipped, they should be organized in a sequential manner in boxes with separate compartments for each specimen.

CDC recommends against the following:

- Do not place any dry ice in the "Primary Container" or "Secondary Container", foam envelopes, ziplock bags, cryovial boxes, or hermetically sealed containers.
- Do not place Primary Containers sideways or upside down in ziplock bags.
- Do not use red top Secondary Containers for Category A Infectious Substances.
- Do not place any paperwork in the Secondary Containers or ziplock bags, so as not to damage the paperwork.
- Do not use biohazard/autoclave bags to prepack your materials due to the inadequate seal of these bags.

**For laboratory related questions:**

Brian Pope

[BPope1@isdh.IN.gov](mailto:BPope1@isdh.IN.gov)

317-921-5843

**For epidemiology and authorization related questions:**

Sara Hallyburton

[Shallyburton@isdh.IN.gov](mailto:Shallyburton@isdh.IN.gov)

317-234-2809