



Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance with Testing for COVID-19

Dear Doctors,

In view of the local and global situation of COVID-19, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) appeals to private medical practitioners in the community to collect respiratory specimens from patients presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms, especially patients with travel history outside Hong Kong within 14 days before onset of symptoms, and send to an accredited private microbiology laboratory for transport to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) for SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR test.

You might have received the enclosed invitation letter from the Communicable Disease Branch of CHP which details the recommendations of handling specimens, the requirements for requesting for SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR test, and the guideline on the procedures for collection of deep throat saliva specimens for patients.

Let's joint hand to safeguard the health of people in Hong Kong.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,
GOPC PPP Programme Office
Hospital Authority

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (44) in DH CDB/9/12/6/4 Pt.1

6 March 2020

Dear Private Medical Practitioners,

**Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance with Testing for COVID-19 at Clinics
of Private Medical Practitioners**

We write to inform you that the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health will provide free RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 virus (the COVID-19 virus) for Private Medical Practitioners (PMPs) through accredited private microbiology laboratories.

In view of the local and global situation of COVID-19, we would like to enhance the surveillance among patients of PMPs. In this regard, we would like to solicit your support to collect respiratory specimens from patients presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms, **especially patients with travel history outside Hong Kong within 14 days before onset of symptoms**. The recommended specimen of choice is nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) taken with a synthetic fibre swab with plastic shaft inserted into the nostril parallel to the palate. The specimens should be put in a transport medium and screwed tight to avoid leakage. Early morning deep throat saliva is an alternative specimen which should be collected into a sterile, leak-proof, screw-cap sputum collection cup. PMPs are required to obtain swabs, collection cups and transport medium from private laboratories. Please refer to **Annex I** for the recommendations on handling of specimens.

PMPs could order the SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR test for respiratory specimens through an accredited private laboratory. Please use the request form of PHLSB (available from: https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/test_request_form_public_health_laboratory_centre_dh2546.pdf) and specify "**Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance for COVID-19 in GPs**" on the request form. Also, the following information should be clearly stated on the form:



- Patient's particulars (including name, age, sex, etc.)
- Clinical details including fever, symptoms, travel and contact history, and occupation
- Requesting doctor's mobile telephone number (*for informing any positive result*)
- Patient's mobile telephone number (*for immediate contact with patients tested positive*)
- Fax number of the laboratory for receiving report on the result

The specimens could be sent to an accredited private microbiology laboratory for transport to PHLSB on the day of collection. The samples should be delivered to PHLSB in triple packaging by the accredited private microbiology laboratory following existing arrangement. This service is provided on Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Reports will normally be available on the next working day upon receipt of specimens by PHLSB and will be sent out by fax to the requesting private laboratories. The requesting doctor would be informed of cases with positive results. Please contact PHLSB (Tel: 2319 8360) if you have any enquiry.

For patients who collect **early morning** deep throat saliva at home by themselves, please provide a specimen bottle and two specimen bags to the patients. The guideline on the procedures for collection of deep throat saliva specimens for patients is attached in **Annex II**. They may also access the video at <http://videocwp.ha.org.hk/wmv/deep%20throat%20saliva%20v2.mp4> or by scanning the QR code. They should collect the sample in the morning and return the specimen to your clinic as soon as practicable. As no transport medium is provided, the specimens should be sent to a private laboratory for transport to PHLSB before 4:00pm (Monday – Friday, except public holidays) on the same day. Otherwise, the specimen should be refrigerated.

The CHP will inform patients tested positive immediately to arrange admission to a public hospital. If you prefer us to inform you of any positive result when your clinic is closed, it is important to write down your mobile telephone number on the laboratory request form. You are reminded to inform the swabbed patients that testing for SARS-CoV-2 will be performed. All patients tested positive will be arranged by the CHP to be admitted to a public hospital for isolation and further management. The CHP will inform the patient directly for the arrangement. Please give the information sheet on health advice (**Annex III**) to the patients to follow when waiting for the test result at home.

Moreover, you are reminded to adhere strictly to infection prevention and control measures when taking respiratory specimens from patients. Adequate personal protection equipment should be worn. For details, please refer to the guidelines of the CHP (available from: https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ic_advice_for_nid_in_healthcare_setting.pdf).

Thank you again for your unfailing support in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'SK CHUANG', written in a cursive style.

(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

Annex I

Collection and handling of specimen

The following key points are recommended to be observed:

- General advice for staff handling patient specimens
 - Adherence to standard precautions and hand hygiene is crucial when handling specimen
 - Eating, drinking and smoking are not permitted in the reception area. Food shall not be stored in the reception area
 - Specimens should be transported in individual leak-proof bags marked with "BIOHAZARD". Request forms (if any) should be placed outside the plastic bag
 - If specimens cannot be sent out within 4 hours after receiving the specimen from patient, please keep in refrigerator at 4°C before transportation
 - Refrigerator used for specimen collection should be clearly labelled and should not be used for food, drinks or medications
 - Specimens should be kept upright as far as possible to prevent leakage
 - Hand hygiene should be performed after handling any specimens

- Management of spillage
 - With gloved hands, soak the spill with disposable cloths/paper towels wetted with 10,000ppm hypochlorite solution or acceptable alternative disinfectant
 - After 10 minutes, wipe and dry surfaces with clean and dry paper towels

收集深喉唾液樣本病人須知

採集樣本時間：於起床後，刷牙漱口、飲食前



掃瞄二維碼觀看教學影片

程序：



1. 預備以下急症室/門診所提供的物品：一個樣本瓶、兩個樣本袋、紙巾



2. 以肥皂及清水洗手或以酒精搓手液潔手



3. 檢查樣本瓶上的個人資料是否正確



4. 打開樣本袋及樣本瓶蓋



5. 於喉嚨發出「Kruuua」的聲音以清出來自咽喉的唾液



6. 除下外科口罩，將唾液吐入樣本瓶內，避免唾液沾到樣本瓶外面。(如量太少，重覆以上步驟)



7. 戴上外科口罩



8. 蓋好及扭緊樣本瓶蓋，確保沒有滲漏



9. 用紙巾抹乾淨樣本瓶表面



10. 將樣本瓶放入樣本袋內，確保瓶身直立沒有滲漏，並以肥皂及清水洗手或以酒精搓手液潔手

Patient Information Sheet on Deep Throat Saliva Collection



Scan QR code for the demonstration video

Time of specimen collection: After getting up and before brushing teeth, eating or drinking

Steps:



1. Prepare the items, including one specimen bottle and two specimen bags provided by AED / GOPC, and tissue



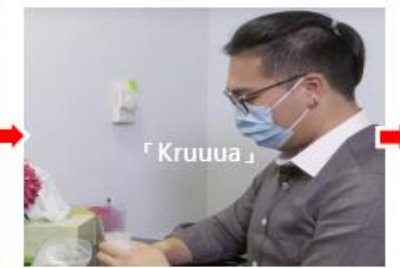
2. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water / alcohol-based hand rub



3. Check whether the personal details printed on the specimen bottle are correct



4. Open the specimen bottle and specimen bags



5. Make the noise of "Kruuuu" from the throat to clear saliva from deep throat



6. Take off the surgical mask and spit saliva into the bottle
(repeat the previous step if the saliva volume is too little)



7. Put on surgical mask



8. Close the lid of specimen bottle tightly to **ensure no leakage of saliva**



9. Clean the bottle surface with tissue



10. Put the bottle into specimen bag and then the 2nd bag. Keep the bottle upright all the time. Clean hands afterwards.

Annex III

給等候2019冠狀病毒病測試結果的非留院人士之感染控制建議 (更新於二零二零年二月二十六日)

前言

本建議適用於在門診出現發燒和輕微呼吸道症狀，且無2019冠狀病毒病流行病學聯繫的非留院人士。此類病人在等待2019冠狀病毒病病毒測試結果時可返回住所，並不需要住院。

病人離開診所時的建議

- (a) 由於閣下出現呼吸道感染病徵，建議求診後仍需佩戴外科口罩。
- (b) 盡快返回家中休息，避免外出。
- (c) 時刻保持手部衛生。

病人在家中的建議

- (a) 留在家中休息；在病情好轉前，盡可能與家人保持距離，避免親密接觸。
- (b) 避免與其他家庭成員共享私人物品或一起用餐。
- (c) 經常潔手及遵守咳嗽禮儀。
- (d) 盡量留在通風良好的單人房。如可行的話，其他家庭成員則留在不同的房間。
- (e) 打開窗戶以確保共用空間維持良好的通風。
- (f) 減少照顧病者人數，照顧時需佩戴口罩，並經常潔手。
- (g) 每日用 1 比 99 稀釋家用漂白水（以 10 毫升 5.25% 次氯酸鈉家用漂白水混和於 990 毫升清水內）進行清潔消毒，待 15 至 30 分鐘後，再用清水清洗。金屬表面則可用 70% 火酒清潔消毒。
- (h) 當物品表面或地面被呼吸道分泌物、嘔吐物或排泄物污染時，應先用吸水力強的即棄抹巾清除可見的污垢，然後再用消毒劑清潔消毒受污染及附近的地方。非金屬表面可用 1 比 49 稀釋家用漂白水（以 10 毫升含 5.25% 次氯酸鈉漂白水混和於 490 毫升清水內）作清潔消毒，待 15 至 30 分鐘後，用水清洗並抹乾。金屬表面則可用 70% 火酒清潔消毒。
- (i) 如病人的健康狀況在等候測試結果期間惡化，應戴上外科口罩，並到就近的急症室求診。有需要時可呼召救護車。
- (j) 如有家庭成員出現發燒或呼吸道感染症狀，應佩戴外科口罩，立即求醫。

如廁時的注意事項

- (a) 沖廁前先蓋好廁板，以減少病菌散播。
- (b) 如廁後務必要以梘液和水洗手。

Annex III

Infection control advice to outpatients awaiting test result for COVID-19 (updated on 26th February 2020)

Preamble

This advice applies to patients seen at outpatient settings with fever and mild respiratory symptoms without epidemiological links of COVID-19. This group of patients does not require admission to hospital and can return to their place of residence while waiting for test result of COVID-19.

Advice for patients leaving the clinic

- (a) As you are having respiratory infection symptoms, please continue to wear a surgical mask after clinic attendance.
- (b) Please return home to take a rest as soon as possible and avoid going out.
- (c) Always maintain hand hygiene

Advice for patients at home

- (a) Please stay in your residence for rest and refrain close contacts with other household members as far as possible before symptoms resolved.
- (b) Avoid sharing of personal items and meals with other household members.
- (c) Perform hand hygiene frequently and observe cough etiquette
- (d) Stay in a well-ventilated single room as far as possible. Household members should preferably stay in a separate room
- (e) Ensure that shared spaces are well ventilated by keeping windows open
- (f) Limit the number of caretakers of the patient. Wear a mask when caring the patient and perform hand hygiene frequently.
- (g) Clean and disinfect the home environment daily with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (mixing 10 ml of bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with 990 ml of water), leave for 15-30 minutes and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- (h) If places are contaminated by respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, use strongly absorbent disposable towels to clean up the visible matter. Then disinfect the surface and the neighbouring area with disinfectant. For non-metallic surface, disinfect with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixture of 10ml of household bleach containing 5.25% hypochlorite solution with 490ml of water), leave for 15 - 30 minutes, and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- (i) If the patient's health condition deteriorates while awaiting test result, please put on a surgical mask and seek medical attention at the nearest Accident and Emergency Department. Call an ambulance if necessary.
- (j) If a household member develops fever or respiratory symptoms, he or she should put on a surgical mask and seek medical attention immediately

Proper use of toilet

- (a) Close toilet lid before flushing to minimize spread of germs
- (b) Always wash your hands with liquid soap and water after toileting