SPECIMEN COLLECTION & TRANSPORT INSTRUCTIONS

Specimen Collection Procedure for Poxvirus PCR Testing

PRE-APPROVAL
Consultation and testing approval should be coordinated with the communicable disease group for the county where the patient resides.

1. County of San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department
   a. Business hours: (805) 781-5500
   b. After hours: (805) 781-4550
2. Santa Barbara County Disease Prevention
   a. 24/7: (805) 681-5280
3. Ventura County Communicable Disease Office
   a. 24/7: (805) 981-5201

Patients must present with firm, well circumscribed, deep-seated, and umbilicated skin lesions associated with smallpox, monkeypox, or other orthopoxviruses (refer to: www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox). Extra precautions will need to be taken if smallpox (variola virus) is suspected.

Once approval is obtained, the communicable disease group should contact the lab at (805) 781-5510 to coordinate the specimen shipment and testing.

If a specimen tests positive for non-variola orthopoxvirus DNA, a duplicate specimen will be referred to the CDC for confirmatory monkeypox testing. The CDC requires that a case ID be obtained prior to referral. To obtain a case ID, the following information is needed by the laboratory:

1. Patient initials, date of birth, and sex
2. Clinical and epidemiologic criteria for testing (e.g., presence of characteristic rash, contact to a known case, etc.)

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

1. Collect the skin lesions with a dry swab using a sterile nylon, polyester, or Dacron swab with a plastic or thin aluminum shaft. Do not use other types of swabs. Place in a sterile container and refrigerate within an hour of collection.
2. More than one lesion should be sampled, preferably 2 to 3 lesions from different body sites, for preliminary and confirmatory testing.
   a. **Vigorously** swab or brush each lesion with two separate sterile dry swabs.
   b. Break off swabs and place each into separate sterile tubes or containers.
   c. Sample, label and store each lesion separately. **Do not place in VTM or UTM.** Swabs must remain dry.
   d. Fill out the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory Requisition completely.
   e. Indicate on requisition that you are requesting **Poxvirus testing.**
   f. Label the specimen with the patient’s full name, date of collection, and specimen source.
g. Include patient’s vaccination history [date of smallpox (vaccinia) vaccination], clinical findings and symptoms (date of rash onset), and travel or exposure history on the requisition.

3. **Note: If testing is needed for other viral causes of rash, separate collection is required.**
   Preferred specimen types by virus are as follows:
   a. Varicella-Zoster Virus and Herpes Simplex Viruses: Swab specimens collected from cutaneous and mucocutaneous lesions in viral transport media (VTM) or universal transport medium (UTM).
   b. Enterovirus: Nasopharyngeal swab in VTM.

**SPECIMEN STORAGE & TRANSPORT**

- Dry swabs of lesions should be stored at refrigerated temperature (4°C) if shipping in 24-72 hours, otherwise store dry swabs at -80°C.
- Clinical specimens should be shipped ASAP at refrigerated temperature in Category B packaging.
- Deliver to: San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory, 2191 Johnson Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

**REJECTION CRITERIA**

- Incomplete specimen labeling/documentation
- Improperly stored specimens
- Swabs/scabs placed in viral or universal transport media
- Holding time greater than 72 hours at refrigerated temperature
- Specimen tubes/containers not sealed properly