**Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)**  
**Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT)**  
**Health Alert Network (HAN)**  
**January 31, 2020**


As additional cases of a novel coronavirus have been confirmed in the U.S., the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) continues to be in close communication with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The outbreak caused by the new coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China continues to evolve and is being closely monitored. CDC now recommends screening of travelers from all regions of China and not only Wuhan City as previously directed.

**Recommendations for Healthcare Providers**

Healthcare providers should obtain a detailed travel history for patients being evaluated with fever or respiratory illness. Patients in the United States who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a person under investigation (PUI) in association with the outbreak of 2019-nCoV. Testing for 2019-nCoV can currently only be performed by the CDC. Positive coronavirus tests performed at other laboratories can only test for the more common community coronaviruses and not for this specific virus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical Features</th>
<th>Epidemiologic Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)</td>
<td>Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient within 14 days of symptom onset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)</td>
<td>A history of travel from Hubei Province, China within 14 days of symptom onset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization</td>
<td>A history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnotes
1Fever may be subjective or confirmed  
2Close contact is defined as—  
a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters), or within the room or care area, of a 2019-nCoV case for a prolonged period of time while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection); close contact can include caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a 2019-nCoV case – or –  
b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a 2019-nCoV case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.  
Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Considerations when assessing close contact include the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk) and the clinical symptoms of the person with 2019-nCoV (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient). Special consideration should be given to those exposed in health care settings.  
3Documentation of laboratory-confirmation of 2019-nCoV may not be possible for travelers or persons caring for patients in other countries.  
4Category also includes any member of a cluster of patients with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) of unknown etiology in which 2019-nCoV is being considered that requires hospitalization. Such persons should be evaluated in consultation with state and local health departments regardless of travel history.  
See CDC’s updated Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus.  
Consultation with Public Health for Potential Persons Under Investigations (PUI)  

- Immediately notify ADPH Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks at 1-800-338-8374.  
- Fax completed form to ADPH email: CDFax@adph.state.al.us or fax 334-206-3734.  

Testing, and Specimen Collection  
To increase the likelihood of detecting 2019-nCoV infection, CDC recommends collecting and testing multiple clinical specimens from different sites.  
**All patients must be approved for testing via the consultation process, AND all specimens must be shipped to the ADPH Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) for processing.**  
**Specimen Collection and Storage:**  
Health care providers should exercise standard, contact and airborne precautions, including the use of eye protection during the collection of specimens. For details see: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html  
CDC recommends the collection of 3 specimen types:  
1. **Lower respiratory tract options**  
a. Bronchoalveolar lavage or tracheal aspirate - Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container, OR  
b. Sputum - Have the patient rinse the mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container.
2. **Upper respiratory tract options**
   
a. **Nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab (NP/OP swab)** - Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Place inoculated swabs immediately into tubes containing viral transport media. **NP and OP specimens should be placed in separate vials, OR**

b. **Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate, or nasal aspirate** - Collect 2-3 mL into a sterile, dry, leak-proof, screw-cap container.

3. **Serum**
   
a. Collect 5-10 mL of whole blood in a serum separator tube, centrifuge, extract serum, and place in a sterile tube.

b. For infants collect minimum of 1 mL of whole blood in a serum separator tube, centrifuge, extract serum, and place in a sterile tube.

**Storage:**
Refrigerate specimen at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours.

**Shipping:**
Complete one requisition form for each specimen.

- Mark “Other Test” and write “Respiratory Panel”, then complete “Agent suspected” by indicating “2019-nCoV”.
- Include specimen collection date, date of symptom onset, as well as dates and locations of recent travel.
- If you are a WebPortal user, text “2019-nCoV” in “Special Instructions”. For the test, order “RESP_PNL”. Select “Additional Information” and complete all appropriate data.

Note: The specimens should be placed in an insulated container with frozen ice packs for shipping.

- The specimens may be taken to your local county health department to be couriered to the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) overnight (at no cost). Contact your local county health department to coordinate courier pick up time.
- **OR**
- Ship specimens directly to the BCL-EID at 8140 AUM Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117.

If you have questions about specimen collection and shipping, call the Emerging Infectious Diseases Section (334-260-3400) at the BCL or email clab@adph.state.al.us.