

AMPATH LAB UPDATE

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SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 testing



Dear colleague

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the global outbreak of the novel SARS-CoV-2, the cause of the disease COVID-19, to be a pandemic. Ampath Laboratories is now providing PCR testing at the request of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).

COVID-19 is a Category 1 notifiable medical condition that poses a significant public health risk, thus private clinicians and laboratories are requested to follow the guidelines issued by the NICD and the Department of Health (DoH). Only patients who meet the current NICD case definition and who have been assessed by a clinician will be tested at Ampath. The criteria required for a patient to be classified as a "patient under investigation (PUI)" and to qualify for testing are listed in Table 1 overleaf.

Collecting a specimen for COVID-19 PCR testing

A nasopharyngeal and an oropharyngeal swab are required for COVID-19 PCR testing. Should you be examining the patient, it would be advisable to collect the swabs in order to limit the numbers of people exposed to the patient. Alternatively, you can refer the patient to a designated Ampath depot for the specimen collection. **Please phone the depot and make an appointment for the patient beforehand.** This will allow the depot to prepare their staff and collection site and ensure the safety of all patients.

Please complete an Ampath request form and request "COVID-19 PCR" and the PUI form, together with a contact tracing form. These forms must accompany the patient's samples to the Ampath laboratory, which is required to forward these to the NICD. The PUI form, which is combined with a contact tracing list, can be obtained at the following link: <http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

The labelled specimen and completed forms should be placed in an Ampath specimen bag and sent to the laboratory at room temperature. The testing laboratory will send the results to you within 24 hours of receipt.

The cost of the test

The cash price is R990.00. Medical schemes are reimbursing patients for the test and the test is being charged at medical scheme rates.

Safety measures

In order to contain further transmission of the virus, additional safety measures are needed from clinicians when consulting with patients with suspected COVID-19 infection:

- Ideally implement a screening process to avoid an infectious patient entering your rooms and exposing other patients and staff to the pathogen.
- Ensure that you have sufficient personal protective equipment in your rooms to protect yourself during the consultation.
- Please refer to the following link for the NICD's "COVID-19 Quick Reference for Health Workers" for guidance: <http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>
- Ensure that the patient dons a surgical mask prior to entry to protect other people in your consulting area.
- Ensure that the patient uses a hand sanitiser before entering your rooms.

Resources

1. The NICD: <http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/>
2. The WHO (included daily situation reports with affected countries): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/>



Please contact your local Ampath pathologist for more information.

Table 1: Criteria for Patient Under Investigation (PUI)

Persons with acute respiratory illness with sudden onset of at least one of the following: cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever $\geq 38^\circ\text{C}$ (measured) or history of fever (subjective)] irrespective of admission status.

AND

In the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms, met at least one of the following epidemiological criteria:

- Were in close contact¹ with a confirmed² or probable³ case of SARS-CoV-2 infection

OR

- Had a history of international travel (highest risk to countries with local transmission of the virus)

OR

- Worked in, or attended a health care facility where patients with SARS-CoV-2 infections were being treated

OR

- Were admitted with severe pneumonia of unknown aetiology

¹ **Close contact:** A person having had face-to-face contact or was in a closed environment with a COVID-19 case; this includes, among others, all persons living in the same household as a COVID-19 case and people working closely in the same environment as a case. A healthcare worker or other person providing direct care for a COVID-19 case, while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection). A contact in an aircraft sitting within two seats (in any direction) of the COVID-19 case, travel companions or persons providing care, and crew members serving in the section of the aircraft where the index case was seated.

² **Confirmed case:** A person with laboratory confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms.

³ **Probable case:** A PUI for whom testing for SARS-CoV-2 is inconclusive (the result of the test reported by the laboratory) or for whom testing was positive on a pan-coronavirus assay.