

TITLE: Off-Site COVID-19 Specimen Packaging for Transport	Doc #: PPR-R-PP-0004
Section: Technical Manual – Pre/Post Analytical	Version: 2.2 Current
Document Owner: PLM Client & Support Services Program Manager	Effective Date: 2022-06-03
Final Approval: PLM Zone Directors	Review Date: 2023-12-31

Purpose

This procedure provides instruction for packaging and securing viral swabs and throat gargles, collected in-home, or at an off-site collection centre for transport in a manner that maintains proper storage conditions, preserves specimen integrity and ensures patient confidentiality.

Abbreviations and Definitions

TDG – Transportation of Dangerous Goods

Materials

Supplies
Absorbent material
48oz. U-TEK® gel packs, or similar size cold pack, stored at 4°C ±2°C for a minimum of 8 hours
Corrugated cardboard dividers, approximately 8" X 8" (trim as necessary)
44oz. Cryopak hard ice packs, or similar size hard ice pack, frozen at -20°C to -30°C for a minimum of 12 hours.
Newsprint / paper
Plastic bags
Tube rack
Equipment
Insulated carrying container (conforming to type P650, per TDG regulations)

Special Safety Precautions

The transport of laboratory specimens is regulated by the Canadian Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Act and Regulations. Persons packaging and/or transporting such specimens must possess current TDG certification or comply with Transport Canada Temporary Certificate TU 0764.

The use of a three-part packaging system is required:

- a primary leak proof container (i.e. the specimen tube / swab / specimen container),
- a secondary leak proof container (sealed plastic bag) with absorbent material inside the bag (enough to absorb any possible leaks), and

- a rigid outer packaging with at least one surface having minimum dimension of 100 mm x 100 mm. (P650 transport container).

Standard precautions apply.

Procedure

1. Specimen preparation for transport (specimens packaged individually)


Step	Action
1.1	Ensure all lids are securely closed.
1.2	Place each specimen swab / specimen container in its own plastic bag (secondary leak-proof container). The corresponding requisition must be placed in the outside pouch of the bag.
1.3	Place enough absorbent material in the bag to absorb any possible leakage.
1.4	Seal the plastic bag closed.
1.5	Keep specimen at or below 4°C until transport to lab.

2. Specimen preparation for transport (swabs placed in racks)

Racking is used to increase lab efficiency and improve turn-around time. **Racking is mandatory when more than 10 specimens are being submitted.** If racks are not used, there may be a delay in processing time. Contact your local/regional lab for racks.

Step	Action
2.1	Ensure lids are securely closed.
2.2	Place specimen swab in an appropriately sized rack. With rack sitting horizontally, place swab into the rack in a row tracking from left to right, beginning from the bottom left corner of the rack. Start each row on the left.
2.3	Place corresponding requisitions in the same order as the specimen swab in the rack. Alternately, place the specimen swab in the rack in the same order used to do online requisition / portal entry (where available).
2.4	Wrap each rack in absorbent material.
2.5	Place each wrapped rack into a separate plastic bag and close the plastic bag.
2.6	Place the requisitions into a separate plastic bag or bundle them using a paperclip. Attach the requisitions to the outside of the corresponding bagged rack (e.g., using an elastic band). Each rack must have a corresponding set of requisitions. Do not place the requisitions into the plastic bag with the rack.
2.7	Keep specimens at or below 4°C until transport to lab.

3. Container selection

Step	Action
3.1	Select an insulated specimen transport container and visually inspect the container (and strap, if present) to ensure they are in good condition, clean and dry.
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the specimen transport container is labelled in accordance with the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations or Transport Canada Temporary Certificate TU 0764.
3.3	<p>If following Transport Canada Temporary Certificate TU 0764, label the rigid outer container (capable of passing a 1.2 metre drop test):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> add UN3373 label (must be 100mm in size) and next to it write the text: "BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B" and "IN CASE OF DAMAGE OR LEAKAGE IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND 1-888-CAN-UTEC (226-8832)" <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> add text "Test Samples - COVID-19" add text "Temporary Certificate - TU 0764" <p>include the name, address and phone number of the consignor (shipper) and consignee (receiver)</p>

4. Add gel packs to ensure specimen stability

Step	Action
4.1	Place the specimens in the middle of the specimen transport container, ensuring they will remain upright, whenever possible.
4.2	Place a cardboard divider on top of the specimen bag(s).
4.3	Add a total of two cold and/or frozen gel packs.
4.4	Fill any empty space with newsprint/paper.
4.5	Seal the specimen transport container closed.

Procedural Notes

- Gel packs must be at the required temperature prior to use.

Related Procedures and Documents

Document Name	Document #	Location
Transportation of Dangerous Goods Course for Infectious Substances; Biological Substances, Category B; and Dry Ice	Atlas Compliance Ltd.	Atlas Compliance
Transport Canada Temporary Certificates (e.g., TU 0764)	Transport Canada	Transport Canada

Job Aid

Document Name	Document #	Location
Off-Site COVID-19 Specimen Packaging for Transport	PPR-J-PP-0004	SharePoint

Authorship

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References

CLSI. Procedures for the Handling and Processing of Blood Specimens for common Laboratory Tests; Approved Guideline – Fourth Edition. CLSI document GP44-A4. Wayne, PA; Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute; 2010.

[Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act](#)

[Transportation of Dangerous Good Regulations](#)