

IMPORTANT UPDATE re -

COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 testing from the Laboratory

1 December 2020

Labelling of priority specimens

We receive hundreds of specimens per day for SARS-CoV-2 PCR. To ensure rapid testing on priority specimens, the laboratory has two work streams. To enable the laboratory to identify priority specimens, it is essential that request forms clearly state one of the following:

- Higher Index of Suspicion (HIS)
- Symptomatic healthcare worker
- Symptomatic Aged Residential Care resident
- Pre-departure testing

Please use the exact wording as above to assist with identification of priority specimens at the point of receipt. Without clear labelling, priority specimens may be missed and testing will take longer. If priority specimens are not identified at receipt, it is time consuming for the laboratory to retrospectively identify the specimen and this will not be performed.

For Higher Index of Suspicion (HIS) requests, the criteria that they meet should also be included on the request form. The current Higher Index of Suspicion (HIS) criteria are:

Either, in the 14 days prior to illness onset have:

- had contact with a confirmed or probable case
- had international travel
- had direct contact with a person who has travelled overseas (eg, Customs and Immigration staff, staff at quarantine/isolation facilities)
- worked on an international aircraft or shipping vessel
- cleaned at an international airport or maritime port in areas/conveniences visited by international arrivals
- exited an MIQ facility (excluding recovered cases)

Or:

- any other criteria requested by the local Medical Officer of Health.

The criteria are available here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/case-definition-and-testing-guidance-covid-19>

Provision of results via telephone

Please note that the laboratory will not provide results direct to patients over the phone. Please do NOT ask patients to phone the laboratory for their results or put the patient's phone number on the request form with a request for the laboratory to phone results.

Results are provided via HL7 directly to requester's patient management system. The laboratory is unable to phone negative results to requesters.

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