



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

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www.sloPublicHealth.org/Lab

SPECIMEN COLLECTION & TRANSPORT INSTRUCTIONS

Specimen Collection Procedure for Poxvirus PCR Testing (e.g., mpox)

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

If a specimen tests positive for non-variola orthopoxvirus DNA, a specimen will be referred to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) or CDC for confirmatory mpox testing.

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

1. Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn when collecting a specimen from a person with suspected or confirmed mpox. Recommended PPE consists of a gown, gloves, eye protection (e.g., face shield), and a NIOSH-approved particulate respirator with an N95 filter or higher.
2. Do not clean the lesion before sample collection. Also, do not apply a numbing cream or topical agent prior to swabbing as this may interfere with testing results.
3. More than one lesion should be sampled, preferably 2 to 3 total lesions (for 2 to 3 total specimens) if present on different body sites.
 - a. Use a sterile, dry, synthetic swab (e.g., nylon, polyester or Dacron swab) to sample a lesion.
 - b. **Vigorously** swab or brush each lesion with a sterile dry swab.
 - c. Break off swab and place it into a sterile tube or container.
 - a. Label the tube or container with the patient's full name, date of collection, and specimen source.
 - b. For swabs stored dry (preferred): The same lesion should be sampled with two separate swabs. Place each swab in its own sterile container, then put both containers into a single specimen biohazard bag.
 - c. For swabs stored wet: A lesion can be sampled with a single swab. Place the swab into a collection vial with 2–3 ml of viral transport medium (VTM) and put the vial into a specimen biohazard bag.
 - d. Fill out the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory Requisition completely.
 - a. Indicate on requisition that you are requesting **Poxvirus testing**.
 - b. Include patient's vaccination history [date of smallpox vaccination], clinical findings and symptoms (date of rash onset), and travel or exposure history on the requisition.
 - c. Place the completed requisition in the pocket (not inside) of the specimen biohazard bag.
4. **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 from cutaneous and mucocutaneous lesions in viral transport media (VTM) or universal transport medium (UTM).
 - b. Enterovirus: Nasopharyngeal swab in VTM.

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SPECIMEN STORAGE & TRANSPORT

- Refrigerate (2–8°C) dry swabs within an hour after collection. Transport at refrigerated temperature (wet ice) within 7 days. If specimens are to be held longer than 7 days, freeze (-20°C or lower) within an hour of collection and ship on dry ice.
- Clinical specimens should be shipped 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
- Specimen tubes/containers not sealed properly
- Holding time greater than 7 days at refrigerated temperature