



# CoVID-19 testing

## Laboratory Update | April 14, 2020

The CoVID-19 pandemic response has seen an increase in telemedicine. At Southern.IML Pathology we have responded by facilitating telepathology, and assisting doctors to request pathology without needing to print forms by either the doctor or the patient. This is also available for the request of general pathology as we recognise that the care of general medical conditions must continue through this challenging time.

The scale of CoVID-19 testing is increasing as the pandemic evolves and the focus has shifted to detection of community transmission. The decrease in imported cases that we have seen reflects tight border control measures. Local reported data indicates that community transmission remains limited, but there are areas of localised transmission including in the Illawarra region. These areas are listed on the NSW Health website.<sup>1</sup>

### Requests for non-CoVID-19 respiratory virus PCR

- All respiratory viral swabs will also have a CoVID-19 test.
- Where a respiratory viral swab is requested, it will be processed for influenza A, influenza B and RSV as well as CoVID-19. The full respiratory viral panel is currently unavailable due to prioritisation during the pandemic.

### Requests for CoVID-19

- Where CoVID-19 test is requested, this will be processed without other testing.
- Rapid testing is now available on discussion with a clinical microbiologist.

Please feel free to discuss this with one of our Clinical Microbiologists on (02) 42 247474.

### Criteria for testing

Criteria for testing continues to expand and no longer requires public health approval. Suggested criteria are regularly updated on the NSW Health website<sup>1</sup>.

#### What to request

- CoVID PCR on throat + nasal swab
  - Single swab for both sites preferred
- Advise patients to self-isolate until their result is available
  - Provide self-isolation factsheet<sup>2</sup>

## Specimen collection

When an individual meets the criteria for testing, and specimen collection needs to be arranged, the following options exist.

**Note: All patients must have a pathology request for CoVID-19 testing which specifies the criteria for testing and which is signed by the referring doctor.**

### 1 Doctor collection

Doctor collections can be performed when a patient presents with mild illness (no severe coughing or shortness of breath). Full personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, gown, mask and eye protection, must be worn.

If severe illness (severe coughing and shortness of breath), please send the patient to the nearest public hospital Emergency Department.

### 2 Dedicated CoVID-19 collection centres

- 37 Denison Street, Wollongong and 57 Junction Street, Nowra.
- All patients must make an appointment to have the collection
  - Wollongong area phone 02 4224 7474
  - Nowra area phone 02 4423 3111
- Only suspected CoVID-19 patients with a mild illness should be referred to a CoVID-19 collection centre.

### 3 Self-collection

Patients who require CoVID-19 test can use the self collect kit which is available from the Southern.IML Pathology stores department and only at the select collection centres listed below:

**37 Denison Street, Wollongong**  
**Shop 4/17-23 Station Street, Engadine**  
**44 Hopetoun Street, Woonona**  
**Baan Baan Shopping Centre, Dapto**  
**109b Shellharbour Road, Warilla**  
**57 Junction Street, Nowra**  
**111 Princes Highway, Ulladulla**  
**Shop 7, Batehaven Mall, Corrigan Street, Batehaven**  
**73a Queen Street, Moruya**

## Validation of self-collected swab specimens

Data supports equivalent performance of self-collect specimens

CoVID-19 test results: HCW collection v self-collection

	DHM (HCW) collect		Self-collect		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Positive	242	1.8%	20	1.9%	262	1.8%
Negative	13,609	98.2%	1,015	98.1%	14,624	98.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,851</b>		<b>1,035</b>		<b>14,886</b>	

**Table 1:** The detection of SARS-CoV-2 is statistically equivalent in both types of specimen (p=0.75). Data from Douglas Hanly Moir (DHM)

1. [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-update.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-update.aspx)